

REVELATION

3:1-13

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 11th January 2026 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Philippians 3:7-14

Introduction

This morning we are going to resume our verse by verse study of the book of Revelation — a book that states that there is a blessing for those who read and hear its words. And today we're going to pick up our study of it in chapter three. Now, as a quick reminder of the breakdown of this book:

First, in chapter one, John writes about the things he had seen — namely his vision of Jesus in all His glory. Second, in chapters 2 & 3 he writes about the things that are — that is, he would write about the church. And third, he writes about the things that were to take place after those things (which is what chapters 4-22 record).

And so, as we continue to look at chapters 2 & 3, we find that they deal with the church. And specifically, God's church, and what *He* wants from it. For here Jesus, via the hand of John, writes to seven separate churches in what is modern day Türkiye. And as mentioned in the prior weeks, there are three applications to consider:

- First that these letters were written to real churches, with real people, with real things to be praised, but also real problems to address at that time.
- Second, these letters also amazingly map out church history in a remarkable way. Something we can only see with hindsight of the last 2000 years, which we'll consider a bit more next week.

- But third, these things should speak to *us*, because here we read what Jesus *Himself* expects from *His* church — that's us. Both what He expects of us as we gather here this morning. But also what He expects from all churches at all times — that when choosing a church to attend and commit to (and we should do both), we would not start with our own list of *preferences*, but we would first look for what Jesus says a good church should be like.

So then, let us take note of what we read here, for this is one part of the Bible where we see it so clearly laid out for us, as we see what Jesus wants from His Bride — the church — in terms of faithfulness, character and conduct. Indeed, let us note what He expects from each one of us.

Overview of chapter three

- **v1-6** — Sardis (the dead church)
- **v7-13** — Philadelphia (the faithful church)
- **v14-22** — Laodicea (the lukewarm church)

Now, as we look at this specific chapter, we find that it contains three of these seven letters that Jesus dictates to John, which of course makes it easy to break down into three parts. First with Jesus writing to the church in Sardis (in verses 1-6), then to the church in Philadelphia (in verses 7-13) — both of which we'll look at this morning. Then, Jesus writes to the church in a place called Laodicea (in verses 14-22), which we'll take a look at next week.

And as we study *this* chapter, let us again remember that picture, that vision John had in chapter one of Jesus walking among the lamp-stands, which *represent* these churches — that just as the high priest tended to the lamp-stand in the tabernacle, adding the oil, trimming the wicks, even snuffing out those lamps that were not bearing light as they ought to, so Jesus was walking among these churches, filling them with His Holy Spirit, but also trimming the wicks, even ready to snuff them out if they did not bear the light — His light — as they ought to.

So as mentioned in prior weeks, we should take note to remember this picture for we *also* have this promise from Jesus, recorded in Matthew 18, which says:

Matthew 18:20

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

And that of course is a wonderful *blessing*. But that also means that He sees *all* we do. He *knows* whether we are faithful to Him and His Word in our songs, our prayers, and our handling of His Word. It also means that He sees how we treat each other, for better or worse. And He sees how we deal with problems, or whether we fail to deal with problems at all, which is a problem in itself. In short, as I've said before, Jesus is interested in how healthy His church, His bride, is.

And it should be no surprise that He is interested in her, or that He wants her to be free from sin, to be faithful. For what groom-to-be *wouldn't* care about faithfulness of the one he is going to be married to?!! You see, it is Jesus' great *love* for His church which is *why* He writes both commendations — which are things to praise these churches for — but also *correction*; giving warning to those churches that are not living and acting as they ought to. So then, let us continue to consider these letters very carefully.

The pattern in the letters

Now, as with the first four letters in the prior chapter, we will see a consistent format in these next ones. First, Jesus will instruct John saying "To the angel of the church of [insert place name] write...". And so these letters are addressed to the pastor or leader of each of those local churches, but with the intent of all churches listening *and* hearing. And Jesus will also mention something of His own nature as He does this, often repeating details that John recorded in chapter one.

Second, Jesus will command and encourage these churches for doing things that they ought to be doing. And in most cases there are more things He says are good and right, than things He rebukes them for. But He will also call these churches out where they are being unfaithful to Him and His Word. So there will be both commendation and correction.

Third, each letter then continues with an eternal perspective, talking about *he who overcomes* — speaking of those that remain faithful despite everything around them.

And then fourth, each letter concludes by saying "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" — that not only would each church listen to what is written directly to *them*, but that they would listen to all Jesus says to *all* these churches. And that includes you and I as individuals.

So again, if you're one for making lists, I encourage you to make one of the things all these churches are commended for, and secondly what they are corrected for. For as mentioned, that will serve as a useful guide for you today, and in the years ahead.

Chapter three

So then, with those things on our minds, let's begin our study of chapter three, reading in verse one:

Revelation 3:1

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

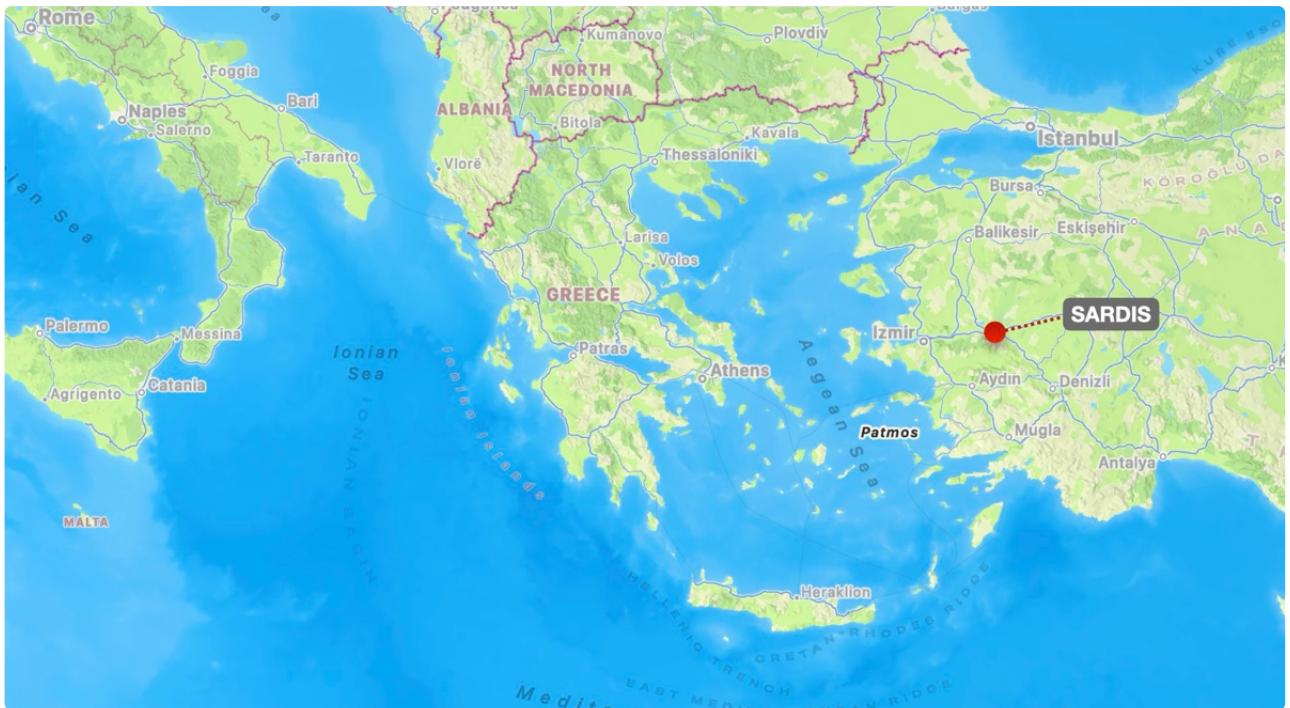
What a damning opening this is to this fifth church Jesus writes to! As such, we need to consider *why* He writes this. But first, let's start with a few basic details.

First, this is written to the pastor of the church in this city of Sardis, that it might be read, understood, and acted upon by all those in that church. And recorded here in the Bible that we might also pay attention to it. Just as with the other letters.

Second, it is written, of course, *by* Jesus, who describes Himself here as *He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars* which are descriptions John also records of Him in chapter one; the *seven Spirits* referring to the Holy Spirit and His attributes as seen in Isaiah 11:2, and the *seven stars* being the messengers, the pastors of these seven churches. And it is notable that Jesus chooses to use *this* description of Himself, as the Holy Spirit is clearly lacking in this church that He is now writing to.

Third, the name Sardis means *remnant* which is quite appropriate given that in verse 4 we will read Jesus say: *You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments* — that is, a remnant that had not compromised.

And fourth, considering *where* this was written to, let's consider the geographical and historical background — for that will be quite helpful for us.



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You see, Sardis was located around 40 miles east of Smyrna, and had been established between 1500-1200 BC — and over time was ruled by the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. At John's time, there were anywhere up to 100,000 people living in it, and the city was famous both for its wealth, and for inventing coinage — the first silver and gold coins having been made there. But it was also distinct from many other cities in that it had a citadel, a fortress, some 1500 feet above the rest of the city, the remains of which you can see here:



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And this fortress was the oldest part of the city, with only the expansion of the city and population requiring them to build lower down. And with three sides of this mountain almost a sheer drop, it was practically unassailable on those sides. That meant there was realistically only one way in and one way out — yet even *that* was not an easy route, and of course it was very easy to defend. And so those living in the city considered it impregnable. They thought no-one could ever get in.

Yet we find that on at least two separate occasions the city was captured.

How? Well first, in around 547 BC, the leader, King Croesus who ruled the city decided it would be a good idea to attack the Persians, who were under the leadership of Cyrus the Great. It went spectacularly wrong, and there was a resulting and successful siege of the city of Sardis.

But how did they get it? Well, one of the attacking soldiers was watching carefully, and one day saw someone drop a helmet over the city wall, and he watched it bounce down. And as he continued to watch he then saw someone come down, get the helmet, and climb back up — and so he realised that there was a path there. So he took his team of soldiers, went up using that route in, and frankly opened the door. This impregnable city was overcome while everyone was asleep.

Then, in around 218 BC, Antiochus the Great hired a mountain climber to be part of his team as he surrounded the city, and once again they were able to get into this city that the inhabitants thought was impregnable. So on both occasions the city was taken while the people were sleeping. And apparently there was a saying that it was a city taken like a thief in the night. And that's amazing context for what Jesus will say to this church in verse 3, for He's building on these examples.

So, with those details laid out to help us with the context, let us consider *what* Jesus now wrote, and *why* — reading here in verse one that Jesus said "*I know your works, that you have a **name** that you are alive, but you are dead.*"

And of course, we've seen Jesus mention previously to *each* of the churches that He knows their works. Just as He sees all that we do. But unlike the other churches that He then also commended, *here* we see Him plainly state that they have a *name* that they are alive, but are, in fact, dead. And what He is saying is that they have a *past reputation*, and that they are *well known* in the world, but they are spiritually *dead*. And this should trouble us, especially when we consider that the Greek word *onoma* translated *name* here is one of the root words from which our English word *denomination* ultimately comes from, via Latin.

Indeed, sadly, there are far too many groups of churches, denominations as we usually call them, who have wonderful stories of prayer, of repentance, of believing in the necessity of Jesus' blood being shed for salvation and atonement, and of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone being preached as the very background to where they came from, yet have descended into mere organisational structures and institutions, often saddled with historical buildings that have become little more than museums, or they have ended up as merely soup kitchens and social clubs. In fact, so commonplace is this that I don't even need to give examples of such denominations, right?

Of course, in many cases there's a reputation of starting right, but now there is great compromise, and there is great failure to teach God's Word, yet there is an arrogance that they have everything right, living on past glories as if those were sufficient for today.

But lest we make the same error, let us first consider that we must not become institutionalised as a church, or as a group of churches as we fellowship with our wonderful friends that are also part of the Calvary Chapel group of churches. We must not do what we do merely out of routine. We mustn't romanticise the good old days, but continually be watching for what God is doing amongst us right now. And we mustn't be unwilling to change, demanding we only sing the old songs, or never adjust the format of our services. And we certainly must never move away from the Word of God because it is inconvenient to teach it, or it is at odds with the culture around us.

But also, secondly, when we look at our own individual lives, we mustn't claim to be a Spirit-filled Christian because of how on fire we once were, when we live in compromise today. And we mustn't act as if we're honouring God when it's been a long time since we sought to fellowship more, or spent time in prayer, or gave faithfully, or involved God in our decisions and our choices. For if we do that, we're living on reputation, not in reality. Let us, then, consider how this applies to us.

But, here, this church in Sardis was not just struggling — it was dead. It was a Christian church in name only. So, what hope was there for it? Well, we read in verse 2:

Revelation 3:2

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

In other words, though this church was dead, though the fire had gone out, there were embers remaining and He's saying fan those embers that the fire might be re-lit. Rather than pull the sheet over it and say "too late — it's gone" Jesus here is wanting to resuscitate it. But he warns them to be watchful, because their city had fallen twice while they weren't watching, while, in fact, they were sleeping. And He says "*you should know better than that!*", "*your own history should tell you the results of being haughty and arrogant, of resting in a false sense of security.*"

Instead, He says strengthen those things that remain. And, if *you* here this morning have grown cold in your walk with the Lord, they are the same things you need to strengthen too. If you only go to church when it's convenient, then go when it's not. If you only pray in trials, pray in the midst of your joys. If you only worship God on Sunday's, worship Him on Monday's too. If you only read the passage we're studying while I have it on screen, read it before you leave home. If you only pick up your Bible to dust it, pick it up to read it. Strengthen what remains, and see what the Lord will do. For as has been well said, if you once felt close to God, and now you don't, guess who moved!

Here in the church in Sardis, the situation was dire. In fact, it was so dire that I believe that there were many among them that were not saved. That called themselves Christians, yet were merely churchgoers. And to them we read Jesus write:

Revelation 3:3

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

That is, remember the gospel that was delivered to you once and for all. And don't just listen to it, but act on it. Respond to it. Repent, and put your faith in Christ to save you from your sin, for your works never will. And He warns them, that if they will not watch, if they will not pay attention to these things, then they will find themselves standing before Jesus as their judge, not their Saviour. He's pleading with them here for their own sakes. Saying if they will not listen, it will come as a surprise to them just as much as their ancestors had arrogantly assumed that their city could not be captured by anyone, only to find it happened twice while they were sleeping.

When we look at this prophetically, which we'll consider more next week, this becomes even more stark. For so many denominations have moved away from believing that Jesus will even return. So much so they won't even read this book in their churches, let alone teach it, as I've shared before.

But for those that know Jesus as their Saviour, who are longing for Him to return as a bride awaits her Groom, their lives will be changed as the Holy Spirit convicts through the teaching and reading of the Word of God. So let us note what we read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, which says:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

The situation, obviously, in Sardis was not good. Yet, as the name suggests — meaning remnant — there was a remnant of real believers even here. Even in this church that was far from God and His Word, there were those that held fast to Him. We read in verses 4 and 5:

Revelation 3:4-5

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

So then, there was a remnant. Genuine believers that were saved, who will walk with their Lord in Heaven, for they have been made worthy by the blood of the Lamb shed for them, washing their sins away until they were whiter than snow. And we read that their names will be found in the Book of Life, and Jesus will confess their names before His Father and before His angels.

But the way that it is put here raises some questions, for rather than say their names will be *added* to the Book of Life, we read that their names will not be *removed* from it. That they will not be blotted out. So what does this mean? Well, some take that to mean that you *can* lose your salvation. That somehow your actions *may* lead to God blotting your name out after He has written it in. And the enemy loves to poke at us with this... saying "*you messed up too much this time for sure! God's definitely going to blot your name out*". But to hold such a view is to ignore what else the Bible says, for Jesus said Himself as recording in John chapter ten:

John 10:27-30

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

And indeed, in the phrasing here in Revelation chapter three, the Greek reads as "*I will never, ever blot his name out.*" That is *not* blotted out, and with no future *possibility* of it being blotted out.

So rather, what is going on here is that the names initially written in this Book of Life are the names of *all* those whom Jesus died for, which is the names of everyone that has ever lived — John writing in his first letter, speaking of Jesus, that *He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.* But where there are those who sadly refuse to accept the free gift of His salvation, they will find that their names are indeed blotted out. For though Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to pay for their sin, though it still cost Him, they are unwilling to accept His grace, and thus have to pay for their own sin.

So perhaps a clear way of putting it is that the Book of Life mentioned here and elsewhere in the Bible, is not a list of all those who are saved, but rather a list of *all* those for whom Christ died (which is everyone), but with those who *refuse* to turn to Him for salvation having their names blotted out.

And that means the important thing, as the rest of the Bible clearly states, is that we must all come to Jesus in repentance and faith. For no-one else, and nothing else, will save us.

So... will you listen? Will you act? Jesus concludes this letter as He does the others, saying:

Revelation 3:6

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

So are you listening? Are you? All of these things — including what we looked at in chapter two, what we read today, and what we will look at next week, is for you to listen to, to pay attention to. Why? Because Jesus says so right here.

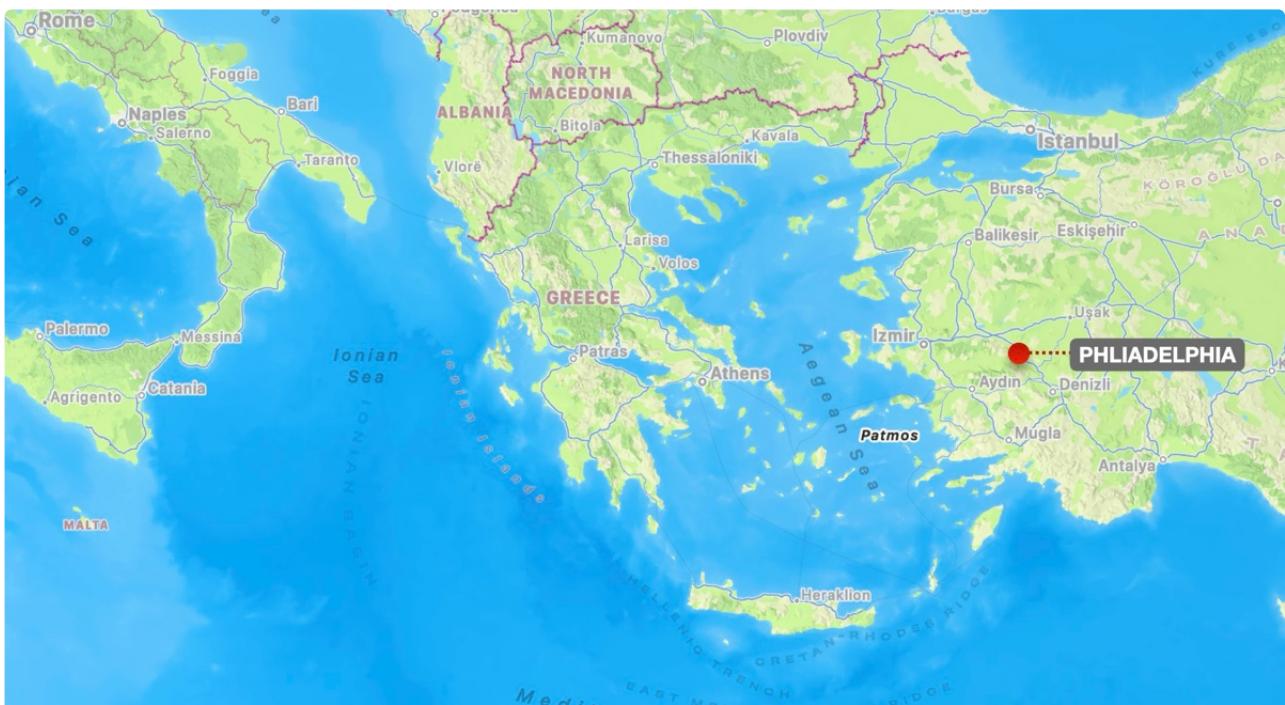
And so in light of this, I beg you, don't be merely a churchgoer that calls themselves a Christian, yet is one in name only. But rather come to know Jesus as your Saviour. And as a believer, don't be part of a dead church, that fails to teach the Bible. For there is too much at stake.

Now, of all the churches Jesus writes to in these chapters, the church in Sardis is most dire. For it was dead. But next, we read of a church that was very much alive. We read in verse 7:

Revelation 3:7

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":'

And so, as with the other letters, it is written to the messenger or pastor of this specific church, and, by implication of how it ends — *that he who has ears should hear it* — to us also. But as for this specific church, to which Jesus writes, it met in the city of Philadelphia. Not Philadelphia in Pennsylvania USA, but what is known as Alaşehir in modern day Türkiye. And it was a fortress city, some 30 miles southeast of Sardis, and between 125-150 miles inland, that was used to delay enemies coming in to the region to attack the greater cities of Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos.



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But what was really wonderful about this city was its name; Philadelphia, which comes from the Greek word **Phileo** which some of you may know is the Greek word for brotherly love. And the charming thing is this name was chosen not because it sounded nice, but because of history in that very city. For it was founded in 189 BC by Eumenes II, and when he died, he was succeeded by his younger brother, Attalus II, who named buildings after his older brother, minted coins bearing his brother's image, and talked about his brother constantly. Consequently, the people of the town began to call this place *Philo-delphia*, or the city of brotherly love. How lovely is that?!

Yet, as we consider the church that now resided there, shouldn't we take stock of how often the Bible calls us to love one another in that way? For Romans 12:10 tells us to *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another*. While in writing to the Thessalonians Paul said *concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*.

And in Hebrews 13 we read we should *Let brotherly love continue and Do not forget to entertain strangers.* While Peter writes the following in his first letter, saying *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.* As Christians, this is how we ought to be — and when we live like this, I believe it does allow God to work in and through us — and that is just what we have here in Philadelphia.

And to *this* church Jesus chooses to describe Himself as "*He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens*" which requires us to go back to a situation in ancient Israel where the treasurer of the nation, a man named Shebna, was crooked, and taking some of the government's finances for himself. I mean, imagine that happening today?! Obviously, God knew of this, and in Isaiah 22 we read that the key to the treasuries of the kingdom was taken off him and entrusted to a man called Eliakim who *could* be trusted.

And in verse 22 we are told that *The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.* And as Joe Focht notes, "*What Jesus is saying here is I'm the one, I have the treasures of the kingdom. I have the key of David. It's in my hand. The true treasures of the true kingdom, David was a foreshadow of the kingdom. And He said, I'm the one that has the keys.*" So look, whatever we long for, whatever we lust after, whatever we strive after, we have to remember there's one who has the keys to the deepest longings in our hearts that nothing in this world will ever satisfy. *He has the key to the treasures of the kingdom.*"

And to this church Jesus writes:

Revelation 3:8

"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

And so, as we'll see, this is the only church besides the one in Smyrna that Jesus wrote no word of correction for via these letters. Not to say that they were perfect, but that they were being perfected because they held fast to His Word. And we read that, as with the other churches, He saw their works. But they had not forgotten their first love. They had not drifted into compromise. But rather, we read that they had given what strength they had and had held fast to His Word, and had not denied Him — which by implication means they were bold enough to share their faith.

And we read that God had set an open door before them that no one could shut. And that's how it always is, right? That anything that happens as a result of our serving is because God opens up the door, not because of how wonderful we are. But what it does require is our faithfulness to God and His Word. It doesn't matter that we have little strength, for He is able. It doesn't matter if we are as small as David was as a boy before Goliath. It doesn't matter if we are as outnumbered as Gideon and his army were. What matters is that we are doing what God's Word tells us to. That we are found faithful. And that means, among other things, we will pray.

Indeed, if Paul found it necessary to pray for an open door, and if he was humble enough to ask others to pray for an open door, then so should we! But prayer isn't a substitute for obedience. So let us hold fast to God's Word, and as a consequence of that let us pray without ceasing. Let us pray for an open door. And let us pray for boldness, that we would speak to unbelievers as we ought to speak, bringing Christ to them, that God might bring them to Christ.

But let us not, under any circumstances, stray from keeping God's Word. Either in our words, our work, our homes, or our church. For that would be a fatal thing to do.

As for this church that had held fast, we read Jesus say next:

Revelation 3:9

Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Which is those whom we also *read* of in the letter to the church in Smyrna, back in chapter 2, referring to those who lived alongside them, that put on a great show of trying to be a Jew according to the law, but did the works of the devil, not of the Lord. But here Jesus says that He will make those who mock and jeer at His bride not only come to worship Him before her feet, but will also make them know just how much He loves her. And I think that is something we can picture, right? — imagining how a groom would feel toward those that had mocked His bride, saying she was not good enough, that she was not lovely. And how he would gladly and publicly declare His love for her, to the shame of all those who had scoffed at the idea. I think this is a real picture of how much the Lord loves us. And it's wonderful.

And His praise for these believers, and I believe all those who hold fast to His Word and remain alive until His coming, continues, with us reading in verse 10:

Revelation 3:10

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

So then, there is reward for those who faithfully hold fast to His Word, who patiently wait up on the Lord, and upon the promise of His coming, which is simply but mercifully that they will not endure the Great Tribulation that is coming on this world, as God pours out His wrath on it — which we will read more about from chapter six onwards.

Now, there are scholars who argue over this, suggesting the church will still be around during the Great Tribulation. Yet Jesus specifically says here that this hour of trial will come upon the *whole* world, not only those who don't know Him. And specifically He says that He will keep those who love Him, who have held fast to His Word *from* this trial. Not merely from the effects of it. It is the same phrase that is used in John 17:15 where Jesus is praying for His disciples, and says *I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.*

In that verse He's talking about keeping them fully away from the evil one, and that is what He is saying here, that He will keep these believers fully away from this hour of trial. Which, by the way, is consistent with how Greek scholars of the time, Homer's Iliad, the writings of Josephus, the Septuagint, all use this phrase to literally describe being taken away from something and kept.

And so, Jesus will not allow His bride to suffer through the Great Tribulation, but rather He will return for it, ahead of it, as we read in 1 Thessalonians chapter four, which says:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

But since we don't know when that day we be, He continues here in His letter to the believers in Philadelphia, saying:

Revelation 3:11

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Not quickly as in soon, but speedily, at a pace. That is, when He does return, and He will, it will happen suddenly. And so He is saying here "be ready", that you not be caught napping spiritually speaking. But rather you may be found as you currently are, which is holding fast to His Word, and persevering in your Christian walk. And this is actually what this wonderful hope we have does. We read in John's first letter:

1 John 3:2-3

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

That is, knowing that Jesus could return at any time keeps us on our toes, in the same way as knowing your parents could return from holiday at any time makes you tidy up the house as a teenager! The dishes get done, right?!

And here Jesus says *hold fast to what you have, that no one may take your crown*. What crown? I believe He is referring to the crown of righteousness that Paul writes of to Timothy, saying:

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

So let us expect our Saviour's soon return. Whether it is soon by our calendar or not. For in doing so, we will be moved to ready ourselves as a bride readies herself for her Groom, because she wants to please him, she wants to appear beautiful before him. And indeed, why wouldn't we want to do so, for we read next:

Revelation 3:12

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

To be identified with Christ is what it is all about. For it is He that washed all our sins away with His own blood. It is He that has made us a new creation. And it is He that makes us complete. And one day, we read, He will write His name on us. We will forevermore be fully associated with Him. And we will be among the redeemed forever. There is nothing this world can offer that compares with that!

Verse 13 closes this letter, saying:

Revelation 3:13

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

So, once again — are you listening? Are you really listening? Are you still listening? Friends, are you going to hold fast to His Word? On one hand we've seen the church in Sardis who failed to do so, who had a reputation, but were spiritually dead. And on the other hand we've seen those believers who lived in the city of brotherly love, who held fast to God's Word, who could look forward to an eternity with the One who loves them the most. What are you going to choose?

Application questions

As I close this morning then, let me ask you a few questions:

- Are you relying on reputation, rather than relationship?
- Will your name remain in the Book of Life?
- Are you holding fast to God's Word in your own life? (for all else stems from that)

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