



SERMON - MESSAGE – AUGUST 21, 2022

Title: “Open Door Policy!”

Scripture: Revelation 4:1-2, 6-8

Rev. Ted Althouse, Pastor - The Chapel of Cypress Cove

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits⁶ of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.”

Doors! Have you ever given any real thought about a door? I think we all take doors for granted because they’re always there and we use them constantly. You have probably come to realize that doors are an important part of our everyday life. Incidentally, the definition of a door is a hinged, sliding, or revolving barrier at the entrance to a building, room, or vehicle.

While I was researching scriptures for today’s message, God led to the book of Revelation. Revelation is a wonderful work of prophetic knowledge and information written about 96 AD by the Apostle John. It may at times be somewhat misunderstood and therefore not used as often as it should be. Today’s scripture text from the book of Revelation is a brilliant form of words that gives the reader an insight or awareness of what can be expected when our earthly life ends. Revelation reveals how Almighty God gave John an open door to catch a glimpse of heaven. While reading this particular scripture, I found it interesting to again see the importance of a heavenly door that was opened to John.

I also did some research about doors mainly because God opened this special door for John to pass through. The first recording of any door was discovered over 4000 years ago and found as a wall painting in an Egyptian tomb. However, in 2010, archaeologists found what is believed to be

the oldest authentic door ever found. While carrying out excavations for a car park in England they discovered a special door in incredible condition. Further examination of the poplar-wood door's tree rings shows it is likely to have been made in 3,063 BC. But the oldest known functioning door is in Hildesheim Cathedral Germany circa 1010 AD. We've also have learned that King Solomon was known to be one of the first to create ornate coverings for his palace openings.

On one of my many trips to the Holy Land, I found an interesting poster about some of the many doors of Jerusalem (which in your bulletin). I tried to visit many of the doors pictured but some are no longer in existence. Some of these doors go back to the 4th and 5th century and are priceless in terms of age. Some doors our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may have opened himself and walked through. History and artifacts can be so educational especially when you link it to God's world creations.

Now, take a moment, look around you and you'll see many doors right here in this room. The main doors to our church welcomed you into the presence of God's Holy Spirit in his house. God wants us to be inspired because we have walked through important doors to worship and praise him. But then I need to also remind you that you don't always have to worship and praise God in a building. Anyone can worship and praise God anywhere...your home, your car, in a field. God can and will be present anywhere and anytime if you want to come into his presence. Remember what Jesus said: *Awwhere two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them*". (Matthew 18:20)

Another interesting note about doors is that at times there can be a mystery of what is behind a closed door especially when we have no earthly idea what might be behind it. Governments around the world...including our very own government have so many closed-door meetings that one congressman in 1908 proposed that all doors should be removed from both the house and senate chambers so the general public would know exactly what was going on behind those doors. Of course, this never happened nor ever will happen because at times it is important for national security that doors to top secret meetings need to be closed to protect the welfare of our citizens.

Now, I have a question for you: if I showed you a partially open door with a bright brilliant light streaming through the opening, would you be somewhat curious as to what might be behind the door? Of course, we're all curious by nature and you probably would like to know what is in that room that is creating that great amount of light...and why? Well, allow me to share this personal true story that I shared a few times before. While I was personally sitting in a spiritual mediation development group held at our local Methodist church in Pennsylvania (over 60 years ago), suddenly, while in a meditative state of mind, I experienced a beautiful comforting feeling

surrounding my entire body, mind and spirit. I sat there very silent and with my eyes closed sensing this wonderful experience, when suddenly in my mind=s vision, I saw a door partially open and through this opening was the most brilliant white light I had ever experienced. Rays of radiant light streaming out from the opening and so brilliant that I really can't fully or properly describe it to you. I have never seen a light as bright like that since that awesome experience. Then suddenly I was engulfed by this brilliant consuming light and very faintly I audibly heard a pleasant voice say: ACome@! Nothing more...just ACome@! I sat there unafraid, feeling very peaceful and serene. That was the first time I felt the ethereal presence of God's Holy Spirit in this wonderful personal way. I used the term Aethereal presence@ of God's Holy Spirit because this light became very real and I felt it touch me. I really felt it and I sensed a pleasant powerful force never felt before or again. And that wonderful personal open-door experience was the very beginning of my commitment to become God=s instrument...serving him as his minister. It took me many years after that experience to realize the fullness of that calling, but I am here and remain God=s dedicated instrument of his saving grace open door message as well as a testament to his powerful light of mercy, grace and love that is available to anyone. I'm not the first to have an open-door experience of God=s presence and will not be the last either. I want you to realize that God opens many doors for us in his own time and place. All we have to do is recognize that the door to him is always open.

Now, let's examine today's Revelation scripture selection and John's open door experience: John...the person we have accredited to writing the book of Revelation also had a very special open-door experience. Listen to his words: *Aafter this I looked and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said; Acome up here, I will show you what must take place after this.*" (v 1) John was Jesus Christ's dedicated disciple called to preach Christ's salvation message on earth but now God had another revelation/disclosure for John. God wanted John to see (John says "*behind a door*")...to see A*what must take place after this (life)*@. Even though John knew what his ultimate reward will be when his earthly life came to an end, God wanted him to catch a tiny glimpse of heaven so he could share this wonderful news with other individuals and give them hope. Friends, this is exactly what I'm doing today...sharing God's good news of hope for a heavenly life. So, God, in his infinite wisdom, chose John to be the one to reveal what we are to know about the eternal life and also get a visual idea of what we might expect when God welcomes us into his heavenly kingdom. Also, this revelation by God to John, helps us understand the importance of A*coming unto him*@ before we die. John became God=s earthly instrument to assist us with believing this truth and understanding.

John reveals to us in verse 2; *Aat once I was in the spirit.*@ (v2) Here John had, what is known as an out-of-body experience...where his own human spirit temporally left his body and was under the divine guidance of Almighty God. This is what we understand happens to some individuals

even today during various intense spiritual experiences. This is when Christ's Holy Spirit takes over our mind, body and spirit to give us very personal experience with God.

Now, listen closely as I want you to understand what this scripture reference means; John was not speaking about when our human spirit leaves the body upon death. That experience is what each Christian should look forward to on the day when our earthly spirit returns to be with God. This occurs at the moment of our earthly death. What Paul was speaking about is another human experience which we should all be excited about that I'll try to help you more fully understand. While we are here on earth and if we desire, we can have the presence of the Christ's Holy Spirit within us to guide and direct us in a super spiritual manner. Let it also be understood, as born-again believers in Christ, that the door to heaven will not be open to those who will not accept or receive the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. Remember Christ said in John 14:6 *"I am the way and the truth and not one comes to the Father except through me."* The kingdom of heaven is open to all who, through faith, believe this truth spoken by Christ himself.

Moving on, John reveals what his spirit sees as he was in the presence of God. Listen; *Aand then before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.*" (v2) Here was the throne of the highest honor...of sovereign authority and of final judgement. John saw a heavenly Entity/Being sitting on the throne of mercy, grace and love. The heavenly deity sitting on the throne was not described by John as having human features, but only by his transcendent brightness. Matthew Henry, the great bible commentator, says that what John experienced was a brightness beyond ordinary limits...that of the supreme deity, Almighty God. I kind of wish John would not have said *Asomeone@* was sitting on the throne...but rather the radiant presence of God. He probably didn't realize the semantics of words and/or the translation became *Asomeone@*. But be that as it may: I truly believe that we, who have accepted Jesus Christ as the son of Almighty God and follow his teachings will also come to have a similar experience upon entering the kingdom of heaven. We will see Almighty God (not as a human person) but as a transcendent brightness beyond ordinary limits of human understanding. I believe that John, in his best form was trying to assist us with a human understanding of what the Supreme Deity...Almighty God...might (and I emphasize might) possibly be that is beyond our human ability to comprehend. Maybe when we do come into the presence of Almighty God, we will understand more fully his awesome presence.

Now, returning to our scripture, John goes on to say: *Aaround the throne were four living creatures...the first...was like a lion, the second like an ox, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle".* (v6-7) Here Paul extended his explanation of his heavenly experience. He saw what we know of as the creations of God...animal...foul....and man. All are Gods' creations...all are welcome in the kingdom of heaven. Then he says; *Aday and night they never stop*

saying >holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come@. (v8) Giving praise and glory to Almighty God...the ultimate creator of the past, present and future is what we must also be doing. Praise and glory to Almighty God is what is done all the time in the kingdom of heaven and you and I must be doing the same here on earth as well. John is telling us that what he experienced is what we must be doing on earth...giving praise and glory to God...day and night...so that when we reach the heavenly realm, we will be able to give more praise to Almighty God in his presence.

I want you to also understand that we can praise Almighty God in various ways and dimensions. We praise him through prayer...through reading scripture...through Sunday and daily worship...through the music we sing and listen to. The list of how we can and must praise God is endless and we must never stop giving praise to God for all the things he has done and will do. Andrae Crouch, one of our great writers of spiritual music gave us a wonderful song that epitomizes the essence of this praise to God through music. As we sing this great song "My Tribute" always remember that the doors to praising God are always open and God is calling us to respond by praising him....

Let us sing together AMy Tribute@ by Andrae crouch....#99