

THE TWO DOORS OF REVELATION

25th March 2018

Folder: Reformation Sunday

Readings: Psalm 89:14-18; Rev 3:14-22

The book of Revelation holds a fascination with many Christians. On the one hand it's full of fantastical descriptions of angels and heavenly thrones, demons and fiery pits - and it's set at the end of days and the glorious coming of Christ. On the other hand we struggle with what it all means mean. We can spend ages trying to squeeze these crazy visions into a timeline that makes sense to our Western way of thinking.

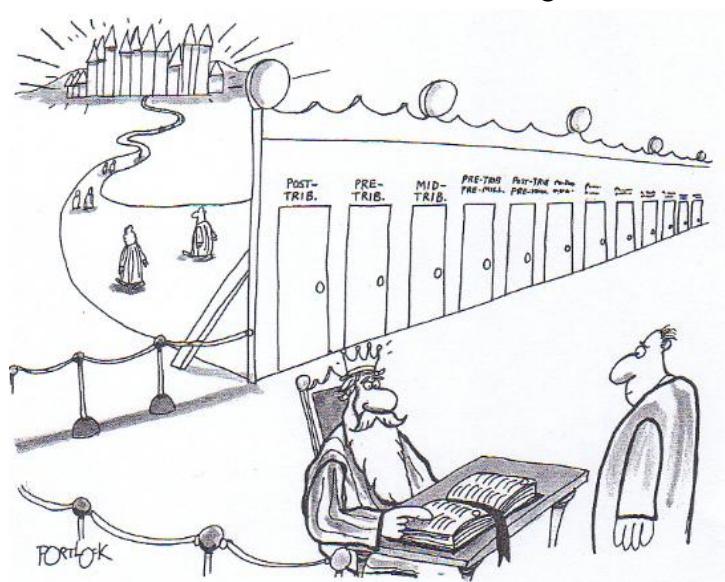
And so, in the church we can come across two extremes. Some folk are focused, even obsessed, with end times, while others dismiss Revelation as fanciful and irrelevant. You may have met both. Now, a number of years ago I stumbled across a cartoon that helps put this in perspective.



In the cartoon a Christian is about to enter heaven. Before him are a great number of doors of which he must choose one. The first three are labeled Post tribulation, pre tribulation or mid tribulation - referring to when Christians will be raptured - taken up into heaven before they die a natural death. Then there door's labeled pre millennial, pre tribulation, and on and on. However, the punch line of the cartoon, the most helpful insight, is when a Christian gets through the doors - they all lead to heaven.

The point is, salvation doesn't depend whether our end times doctrine is right but whether we're in right relationship with Christ. It's good that we take the book of Revelation seriously discerning what we can. But at the end of the day the events and timing of Christ's coming are very much the Father's hands.

Now, this is just a cartoon. There's no long line of doors standing before the pearly gates of heaven. However there are doors in the book of Revelation. Doors that it's vital we get a handle on (pun intended).



Door's when we pass through, lead to eternal and abundant life. But doors that if we neglect, we do so at great peril.

Let's pray

As we open the book Revelation a reminder of it's background. It was written by who? The apostle John. He's now an old man and in jail for his faith. He's been exiled to an island prison for no other reason than for his love for Christ. And it's not just him. There's a wave of persecution sweeping through the churches in what is now modern day Turkey. However, one day while in prayer, John has a powerful vision. And in this vision he's shown many amazing and wonderful things. Afterwards he record's what he's seen and sends it out to the persecuted churches to encourage and strengthen. That's Revelation.

I. The First Door

The book opens with Jesus dictating seven letters to key churches suffering for their faith. The last of these letters, to the Christ-followers in Laodicea, is where we come across our first of two doors. Let's open up this letter – and see what it has to say...

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. Revelation 3:14–16

Imagine getting a letter like that from Jesus! Imagine being described as food to be spat out - not a cheery thought. And the letter doesn't get much better for this Christians until the end.

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Rev 3:19

How is this much better - talk of rebuke and discipline. However, listen to this logic. If Jesus didn't love us he wouldn't discipline us. Because he does love us, like a firm but fair parent, he disciplines. I had parents who were firm but fair and though at the time I wasn't impressed even as little fella I knew it was the right thing and my parents cared. So, it is with Jesus, though in a true and better way than any parent. He loves us dearly, so when we stray he disciplines. Often through tough circumstances he causes us to pause and reflect on how we have strayed. So we might have a good business but start to draw more money than is wise to fund a lifestyle we wish we could afford, a lifestyle not aligning with God's Word. When things come to a head we start praying for God for help. It's always good to pray and he always answers, but maybe his answer "Douglas, declare bankruptcy, turn back to me and I'll help you deal with the consequences". Those Jesus loves, he disciplines.

This is Good News.! A reaffirmation of Christ's love, even though it's in a context of being told off. However, verse 20 is a real delight.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

What a pleasant reversal. Instead of Jesus spitting us out of his mouth he turns the tables saying he'll gladly eat with us. He delights to have fellowship with us, when we let him in. This is key. Letting him in. And it's here we're introduced to the first of two doors in Revelation. So, we'll pause for a bit and unpack this verse. And we'll do this with the help of a well-known painting by Holman Hunt - Jesus, Light of the World.

In the painting we see Jesus standing at a door. And the door is very much unkept, covered with ivy and weeds. Now, the door represents what? A person's life. This person has never invited Jesus into his or her life. So, it's to this overgrown, shut-up-tight door that Jesus comes. And in the painting Christ stands... and knocks... and waits. He's waiting for what? A response. He's waiting to come in and be part of this person's life.

One observant person once told Holman Hunt he'd made a mistake. Something was missing from the painting. Do you know what's missing?... "You've forgotten to paint a handle on the door", he was told.

"Oh no," he replied, "This is deliberate. There's only one handle and it's on the inside."

In other words, we have to open the door to let Jesus into our lives. Christ will never force his way in. He gives us the freedom to choose. It's up to us whether we open the door to him or not. But when we do he promises, "I will come in and eat with you, and you with me". This eating together is a sign of friendship that Jesus offers to all who open the door of their lives to him.¹

This then is the first door of Revelation. Our salvation, our eternal destiny, depends on whether we open this door to Jesus or not.

Now, I'm picking many of you have heard of this door - especially since this verse is so well known and Holman Hunt's painting. But, what about the second door of Revelation. Have you heard of this door? Would you know where to find it in Revelation. Where is this door, who can pass through and to what?

¹ See Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, 60

II. The Second Door

Well, only a few verses later on we read

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..."
Revelation 4:1

Isn't this interesting. Straight after we've invited Christ into our world he's inviting into his. Jesus' has walked through a door into our life now he's inviting us to walk through a door into his life. Let's see what we're walking into.

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 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. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Revelation 4:2–5

a. God is Supreme

What are we seeing here? John has passed through the second door into a world where God is supreme. His glory that is veiled in this world is laid bare for all to see in all its majesty and might and magnificence. Beyond our imagination, where words fail we catch a glimpse of the awesomeness of God Almighty, supreme over all. Not for the last we are introduced to our Heavenly Father as sitting his throne, ruling over all. Yes, Satan has his strategies and schemes and there are battles and plagues and all sorts of chaos but God's supreme rule is never in doubt. This is the world we enter when we ask Christ into our life.

b. Christ is Worshiped

Next, we see Christ himself chapter 5, verse 6

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne. Revelation 5:6

And there's a check in our spirits. One moment we are drawn in the glory of the living God and the next a sadness settles- a lamb, who is slain. Not just any lamb - but our dearest Lord. Christ our Saviour. Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world - slain. And the sadness deepens and tears begin to well as we see the scars of Calvary etched in his palms and feet. As blood trickles from that cruel crown of thorns. But, but, but... This lamb is not slain – even though he bears the marks of death. No, this lamb stands at the very throne of God. And not only that - he is the same Jesus we let through the door into our life. The scars he bears, the blood he shed were for us. And the angels marvel and all heavenly beings worship. Listen to their words...

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:9-10

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Revelation 5:12.

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!” Revelation 5:13

Yes, when we pass through the second door of Revelation we see the supremacy of our Heavenly Father but we also worship Christ who died each of us. And there's more. For when walk through that second door we see God' heart for the nations.

c. God's Heart for the Nations

Back in verse 9

.... and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Revelation 5:9

God cares for every nation and delights to have children from each one of them. To this end he sends servants, you and I, to declare his Good News.

Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings. Revelation 10:11

John is told to prophesy, to bring God's Word, to the nations. And we too are to do the same. To make Jesus, the Living Word, known to all peoples. Why? Because God has a heart for the nations.

And God takes great joy when all peoples come and worship him. Revelation 15:4

For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed. Revelation 15:4

This then is the second door that we are to walk through. One that revels the supremacy of God, Christ the Lamb who was slain that we worship, and God's great concern for the nations.

So what's it all mean? How can I make sense of this? What's the point of these two doors? What's my take home?

Well at the first door, the door of our lives, Christ stands and knocks. Have you let him in? Have you invited Christ into your life? Are you having a meal - friendship - with him? If not, today, you can invite Christ in. He will not force his way. He knocks and waits.

Now, a number of us have invited him in. This is wonderful. But there's a danger. A caution. Something to watch for. The danger is we can let this inviting of Christ to be the beginning and end of our faith. And slowly over time Jesus is reduced to a mascot to cheer us on when we are down. Or fixer, when things are broke. Or counsellor when we need a shoulder to cry on. Or healer when we're sick. This good but Jesus is so much more.

And this is why the second door is vital. We need to walk through the second door where we see God as supreme over all, Jesus worthy of worship and God's heart for the nations.

So we pray for ourselves but also our neighbours, friends, governments and nations
We read the Bible but also write to our MP about the euthanasia bill
We come to church but also visit a neighbour or help in the Salvation Army op shop
We give money to the church but also to missionaries serving Christ other the nations

Yes, the first door shows us Christ is central in our lives and so we nurture our walk with him. We never let this drop. But the second door shows us we serve a big, majestic, awesome God. A God who is supreme over all yet who cares deeply for the nations, for every people.

Yes, we're invited to go through the second door where we see God our Father supreme over all, where heaven and earth worship Christ and were we see God's heart for the nations. *Let's pray.*