

VISION SUNDAY: OPEN DOORS / UNLOCKING HOPE (Pete Greig)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Revelation 3:7-13 (NIVUK)

⁷ 'To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸ I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. ¹³ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The whole of the Book of Revelation is written in the form of a letter addressed to 'the seven churches that are in Asia' [1:4], meaning, not the whole continent of Asia that we know today, but the Roman province of 'Asia Minor' – now central Turkey. John has a vision of the glorified and victorious risen Christ, whom he describes as 'one like the Son of Man' [1:13], who instructs him to 'Write in a book what you see and send it... to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea' [1:11]. Before coming to the main part of the book (which begins in Chapter 4 with a vision of an open door in heaven and a tantalising glimpse of the Divine Throne), Chapters 2 and 3 give us individual prefaces – personalised opening memos – written to 'the angel' of each of the churches. Since *angelos* is the usual Greek word for a messenger, we don't have to imagine that this means a supernatural being – it is quite possibly the leader of the assembly that the writer has in mind, or, in today's terms, the 'senior pastor'. First Century Philadelphia (now *Alaşehir*) was a city subject to frequent, and often severe, earthquakes, which had destroyed great public buildings. This gives extra resonance to the promise, 'The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God' [3:12]. Certainly, the church had known suffering, persecution, tribulation, and shame.

- What do you think is meant by 'the key of David'?¹
- What open doors do you see for us all as Emmaus Rd. Church?
- What open door do you see in front of you? What are you hoping for?
- What is behind your open door? (Or do all the doors seem shut, with only darkness visible – be honest!)
- V.8 says, "I know your deeds... I know that you have little strength." How is this encouraging?
- What do you think Pete meant when he spoke about turning 'doors of importunity to doors of opportunity'?
- Pete spoke about **Prayer, Alpha, Safar, Baptism**, and about **Giving**. Do any of these resonate with you right now, or is there something else? What might be the key to your 'open door'?
- Ancient Philadelphia was a 'gateway city'. It had influence beyond its own boundaries because of its location and available communication technologies (the 'Pax Romana', a common language, and the Roman road system). What unique opportunities might we have because of our location in the historic 'gateway town' of Guildford? (you might like to substitute the name of your town or village).
- What technologies, new and old, might open fresh doors?
- What open doors do you see in your community, or in our nation right now?
- If a city vulnerable to earthquakes could produce 'temple pillars', is there some civic weakness which might be a key to an open door?

¹ This would seem to be a reference to Isaiah 22:20-23, but it might be helpful to note that Eliakim was King Hezekiah's finance minister. Note also (in Revelation 3:7) who is holding the key.