



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 3:7-13

"Kept from the Hour of Trial, part I"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today our study of the Book of Revelation comes to our Lord's letter to the church at Philadelphia, and so our Scripture reading is Revelation chapter 3, verse 7 through verse 13. You will note from the sermon title that there will be two studies on this particular letter, and the reason of course, is because of the importance of verse 10 in evangelical theological discussion. I dare say it's not very important in non-evangelical discussion, but it has proven to be important in evangelical discussion, and to do anything worthwhile with reference to it, we'll have to spend a little more time on it, and even then confess that what we do is only the beginning of the discussion. We begin now with verse 7 and the apostle giving the message of our Lord to this church writes,

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship

before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (or trial), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. I would like for you to notice one thing, that last statement, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," is addressed to all the churches. The plural churches becomes of some significance in the message to the church at Philadelphia. I just ask you to notice, you've probably already noticed it. What our Lord is writing is a series of letters to individual churches, but they have application to all of the churches. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the way in which they shed light upon our pathway. And we thank Thee for their sufficiency, sufficient for our life and sufficient for all of the experiences of life. And therefore Lord, we pray that as we read and ponder the Scriptures, Thou wilt introduce us to the truths that will help us as we live our lives in the day and the age in which Thou hast placed us.

We pray for each one present, that there may be an understanding of the word of God, an understanding of its sufficiency and a reliance upon the statements of Holy Scripture in the experiences of life; those experiences that are most pleasant and exhilarating and those experiences that are difficult and hard, and even those experiences

that we might classify as tragic. We thank Thee for the word of God, for the privilege of knowing Thee, and knowing that we have a triune God to stand behind us and direct us in our life.

We pray for each one present, we ask, Lord, for those who may not know Thee that this may be a time in which they look at their lives in the light of the truth of God and turn to him who offered an atoning sacrifice for sinners. May through the ministry of the word, we all be drawn closer to Thee.

We pray for our country. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ, for this church, for the ministries of the Christian church, wherever they may be, attend them Lord with divine blessing and fruit. We pray for the sick, especially, Lord, do we remember them and in the trials of life strengthen them, under gird them, give healing in accordance with Thy will, and give encouragement of Thy presence in the midst of the experiences. May the hearts of all of us in the experiences of life turn to Thee.

We thank Thee that Thou art our refuge, our strength, and in those experiences that are difficult, oh God, cause us to turn to Thee and to lean upon the promised help that Thou dost give. We pray now Thy blessing upon our meeting, may our lord Jesus Christ be exalted in it for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is, "Kept from the Hour of Trial," a clause or phrase from Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10. We have made reference to historical views of interpreting the letters to the seven churches, and we've also tried to make the point that this way of interpreting these letters is probably not a valid way, that it involves some twisting of history, but the attempt of that view is to say that from the time of the first to the second coming of our Lord may be represented by the seven letters to the churches; the first letter, the letter to Ephesus, representing the earlier stage of the history of the Christian church in this era between the two comings and Laodicea, with its stress

on the turning from the Lord representing the last stages of the age between the two comings.

There are some very interesting coincidences at least, and obviously a theory which commanded some support for rather widespread character at one time must have something that could be said for it. We have tried to make it plain, we do not follow that, but I have referred to it several times, because it is possible that you may have been in a Bible class or may even have read a book in which an author has suggested that that is a valid way of looking at these letters; just one of the ways, but at least a valid way.

Well Philadelphia according to the historical view, would represent the revolt of the 18th and 19th centuries from the empty orthodoxy and falsity of those systems that just preceded that, particularly of the 17th Century, the latter part of the 16th in which the reformation doctrines became rather, what shall I say, rather sterile. And as a result of the sterility and the scholastic thinking of a bad sort, what arose was perceived by many to be a kind of deadness in the evangelical professing church. And then in latter part of the 18th Century at least, and the 19th Century there were some movements, for example, one of them, the Wesleyan revivals that expressed a kind of return to a zealous approach to spiritual things. So, it has been said that what this letter represents is perhaps that period of time. That return to zeal in Christian things after the 16th and 17th centuries has been said to have been variously represented by the Quakers. Many of you will smile when you realize that there are some who think about the Quakers, the Puritans, the Methodists, and the Plymouth brethren for example.

What we do see, in the letter to the church at Philadelphia, is a church in which there is no reproof of the church by our Lord, and so rich in the Lord's approval, what this church represents might be the movement of the Spirit of God to restore the freshness to the church. At any rate that is a view point that has been taken. We are not taking it, but I just mention it for your information. It is true that so often in spiritual things that when individuals and families turn to the Lord there is a zeal, a freshness, a

responsiveness to the truth that tends to be a bit more emotional than at other times, and the result is a vitality and a brightness and a concern that is proper and unusual and good. And then as the generations follow one another, second and third and fourth generations, the zeal of individuals cools and what we have is a profession of the truth but nevertheless the vitality, the concern, the personal interest has been lost in the process. This is the danger that all Christian parents, mothers and fathers face, who have come to know the Lord and know the brightness and the joy and the happiness of the personal salvation which they did not know and then notice that their children are not so excited as they are. And they hope, of course, that their children will be as excited and as concerned, but they often see the result is not that.

I always think of that old story about the janitor of a Park Avenue church in New York City who went to the pastor of this church that had a lot of elite people within it, and he asked the pastor if he might be able to join the church. And the pastor said, after discussing it with him, that he should ask the Lord about it. So a little bit of time went on, and then the pastor saw him one day, and he asked him about the matter, and the janitor replied, that "Yes, pastor, I have asked the Lord, and he told me not to get discouraged, because he's been trying to get in the church himself for twenty years." [Laughter] Well, I think we can all appreciate that, because there are churches that are evangelical in name, but impress you very much as that church on Park Avenue must have impressed people in that day.

Philadelphia is a feeble, but a faithful body of believers. Thought by many students to be a church challenged to a new vision and opportunity, as our Lord says in verse 8, "an open door is set before them" And so this church has been thought to be a church that is challenged to new vision and opportunity unto God's sovereign opening of doors. And by others, to be a church consoled after excommunication from the synagogue, because references are made in verses 7 and 9 that might suggest that. And when our Lord says that he has set before them an open door it has been thought by

them that an open door would mean an open door into the Messianic kingdom, even though they may have been excommunicated by the local synagogue.

We're going to spend some time on verse 10, because of the interest that people do have in it. But let me say right at the beginning, you are not to think that what I say about that text has anything like completeness about it. It may just introduce to you some of the questions that you should study for yourself. But first of all, let's look at the addressees as our Lord speaks in verse 7, "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, John write."

Now Philadelphia was a city thirty-five miles southeast of Sardis, the letter to which we studied last week. It was founded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century before our Lord during the reign of Attalus the Second of Pergamum. For remember, Pergamum was the capital of that general area. It was to be a missionary of great culture, and it was a very successful missionary to Greek culture, because from Philadelphia, the great culture went out over the territory of Lydia with such success, but after a period of time the language of the Lydians became an extinct language, like Latin is today. So, it was successful in that sense.

Sir William Ramsey, who spent a lifetime doing archeological work in Asia Minor, said of Philadelphia that it was "the center for the diffusion of Greek language and Greek letters in a peaceful land and by peaceful means." So, set as it was to the east and set before a large open plain, it was designed in its founding to be the missionary of Greek culture in Lydia and in Phrygia which was at the time a rather wild land. In that sense, the picture that is presented in the letter to the church is representative and parallel to the place that the church had, or the city had I should say, in that particular part of the world. It has been said that the name of the city today, Allashaher is similar to Allashev which means "city of God." I've never found any real support for that, but if it did mean city of God, that is the little town that is there now, it would fit in with verse 12 where we read, "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is

new Jerusalem." And so some parallel between Philadelphia as the set of God and the New Jerusalem, the city of the triune God.

I would like for you to notice for a few moments the description that is given of our Lord in verse 7, "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." This is a remarkable threefold picture of our Lord, but you will notice something new now. Up to this point, descriptions of our Lord that have been given have been descriptions taken from the vision of chapter 1, but here is a description of our Lord that is not taken from the vision. He is described as holy and genuine. He is described as the one who has the key of David. And then thirdly, he is described as he that opens and no man shuts and shuts and no man opens, so, a remarkable threefold picture that our Lord gives of himself.

Now I would like for you to notice these things just for a moment. It is stated that he is holy and genuine. That is remarkable, because the term holy is a term which in its absoluteness refers only to God. It's a term that really means something like separate, different. It's used of every Christian as one who is set apart. It doesn't necessarily have any intrinsic moral notions to it. In fact, the term may be used in the Old Testament of prostitutes, who were attached to a temple, called holy ones. That is, they were ones who were set apart for the particular activity in connection with the heathen religions. So, in Scripture that sense is found. So to be holy means to be set apart, but of course, if you are set apart to the Lord God in Heaven then the ideas of intrinsic holiness become necessarily part of the term. In our Lord's case, of course, that is true. He is described also as genuine. The term being used true, is over against that which is spurious rather than true, is over against that which is false. So, he's the holy and genuine one.

Now I don't have time to go into this, but I would like for you just to remember this, that in the Old Testament Yaweh or Jehovah, Yaweh, the God of the Old Testament in which there is no full revelation of the Trinitarian God. I'm not suggesting they were

different Gods, I mean how this Trinitarianism is not unveiled in the Old Testament plainly, this particular term, holy and genuine, these are expressions that are referred to Yaweh himself. So, in the New Testament, when these terms are taken by our Lord and referred to himself that he's holy and that he's the genuine one, what our Lord is plainly saying is that he is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Now just remember your doctrine of the divine trinity that is that there is one God who subsists in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, so we're justified in speaking of God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. Or to put it another way, we are justified in speaking of Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the Son, Jehovah the Spirit or to use a more scholarly term Yaweh the Father, Yaweh the Son, Yaweh the Spirit.

Now when our Lord then describes himself as holy and true, he is saying, I am the Yaweh of the Old Testament with whom a covenant was made, and who is the guarantor of that covenant, by which God's blessings come to the people of God. It's remarkable when you think about it, that our Lord is claiming the deity of the one true God. He's holy, he's separate, he's different, and those terms are applicable to him. That's why I believe that it is true to the New Testament to say that the Book of Revelation contains some of, if not the highest, Christology of the whole of the Bible, that is the clearest affirmations of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. That may be one reason why some like to discredit this book as a book that John wrote in his senility.

He goes on to say in the seventh verse that he not only is holy and genuine, but he has the key of David. Now one, in order to understand, this as one must in order to understand many parts of the Book of Revelation, must be somewhat familiar with the Old Testament. Being described as having the key of David means that he is described with a metaphorical expression that indicates complete control over the household of David, now since the Davidic covenant is so fundamental to the doctrine of salvation, as set forth in the New Testament, the key of David, if one holds that, one holds the power to introduce to the Messianic kingdom of David.

The background of the statement, the key of David, is the oracle that was spoken against Shebna in the time of the reign of King Hezekiah. He was Hezekiah's major domo, but he was to be removed from his office and replaced by a man whose name was Eliakim. And concerning the new chief steward, the text of the Old Testament says, "I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. Eliakem shall open and none shall shut. He shall shut and none shall open." The language of Isaiah then is designed to present typically the Lord Jesus Christ as the Davidic Messiah with the absolute power to control entrance into that Davidic kingdom. That's what our Lord means when he says that he has the key of David. He possess the authority and power by which anyone who is a recipient of the blessings of the covenant made with David, that anyone must be introduced to the possession through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, if you are a Christian and you believe you have eternal salvation and you are looking forward to the consummation of the covenant with Abraham and with David and the new covenant you have been introduced into the possession of those blessings by our Lord himself.

The third of the descriptions of himself has to do with his activity. He is the one who, as he says, opens and no man shuts, and he shuts and no man opens. He is the author of the opportunity for salvation. He is the one who controls the gates that lead on the one hand, a narrow gate that leads to life, and the broad gate that leads to destruction. It is our Lord who controls them. This is a word incidentally for Believers Chapel, I think. It does not say he can open, and he can shut, but it says this is his activity. He does do this, he opens, he shuts. In other words, he's not talking about the ability to do these things; he's talking about the activity that characterizes him.

This is a kind of activity, incidentally, that has sometimes been claimed by men. There may be, someone has pointed out, an oblique reference in these words to the ancient god Janus, the god of doors and hinges, who was sometimes called Petucius and Clucius, the opener and the shutter. And if you remember any of the pictures that you have seen of ancient mythology, Janus was the god whose picture appears with two faces,

a face looking one way and a face attached to that same face turning the other way. One head and two faces. That would be very convenient in certain situations, but rather strange. At any rate that's way he's pictured, and he held a key as a sign that he had the power to open the doors of heaven or open the shut the gates of peace and war upon the earth. This power, incidentally, was assumed by the pope later on in the history of the development of Roman Catholicism, and the privy counselors of the pope became known as cardinals. And the term cardinal comes from cardo which means "a hinge." They are the ones who share the right of turning the hinge, which determines such things as we have just mentioned. So, our Lord then is one who possesses authority. He is engaged in the activity of shutting and opening and he is the eternal God.

I say this is a word for Believers Chapel, because it seems to me that it is important for us to remember that our Lord is the one who opens and no man shuts and shuts and no man opens. In other words, he has absolute authority, and we, a little group, a rather insignificant group no doubt, nevertheless with the power of the Lord as he directs us, we have the confidence that through him we are able to accomplish great things, and we should never feel that we do not have the power in him to do remarkable things for our Lord. One of the great problems in Believers Chapel, I feel, is that we do not realize that we do have such authority and we are therefore backward and we fail, in our Christian testimony, those about us.

I love this old story; it was told by a Chinese preacher to a man whom I knew very well. It seems that there was a church in China that heard the reputation of a certain Chinese minister that he was an outstanding preacher of the word. And so, they invited him to come and minister to them, but they wrote invitations to him and he didn't even reply to them at first. Finally, they received an answer, but still he did not seem anxious to come. They wrote urging him to come. He refused. They wouldn't take no for an answer though, and so they wrote a letter and they enclosed a first class round trip ticket on the train and asked for him to come. He answered that he would come for three days,

but he told them to advertise the meetings only among believers, because he wanted to talk to the Christians.

And so on the first night when he came, so the story went, the preliminary part of the service was concluded in good style and then the noted preacher stood up to preach to the congregation. He asked how many know what he was going to talk about and called upon them to hold up their hands. And no hands were raised. And so he said, "If you don't know what I'm going to talk about, why were you eager for me to come? I shall not preach to you tonight. Let's have a prayer meeting." So they had a prayer meeting. Well, the people were somewhat chagrined by that, because they were looking forward to hearing the great preacher. So, they said to themselves tomorrow night if he asks us this question we'll all put up our hands and we'll say that we all know what he's going to talk about.

And so the next night, sure enough he did. He stood up, time came to preach, and he asked them, "How many of you know what I am going to talk about?" So, they all raised their hands, and he said, "Well, if you all know what I'm going to talk about, there's no need for me to tell you. So, let's have another prayer meeting." Well the chagrin of the church members was even more pronounced, and so they decided that the third night and last night that half of them would raise their hands and the other half wouldn't. And so, sure enough, the question came, "How many of you know what I'm going to talk about?" And half raised their hands and the other half didn't. And so he said, "Those who know must tell those who do not know, and let's have another prayer meeting."  
[Laughter]

But when the prayer meeting was over, he said some very significant words, instead of dismissing the audience as he had the previous nights, he talked briefly and he said, "A revival within the church is not the question of a new voice, or a new presentation of the truth. There will always be revival when those who know tell those who do not know." And that is true, and it's comforting to know that when we do tell,

we who know, those who do not know we have the confidence that our Lord is the one who opens and no man can shut. Or upon occasion may shut, and all of your fervent appeals cannot open, the hearts of men. Salvation is a sovereign work of God, but we must remember that we are called upon by this sovereign God to do a work of evangelization, but we do it under our Lord's sovereign will.

Now having said that, our Lord comes to a commendation in verse 8 of this group of believers, it is an encouraging word. He says, "you have a little strength, few in number but strong in him." I understand this to be in number, a little strength, not that they have only a little strength individually, because then of course to call upon them to do things would be hardly the right response. He means a little strength not that they are very weak. You cannot expect people who have little strength to do great things. He means little in number, and therefore they have little strength. He says of them also that they have kept his word. That itself is a very important thing. They have kept his word. I assume that that means that in the midst of the problems of the day, they have stood for that which is true.

And we have today good reason for asking people to do the same thing. The world today laughs at the one who keeps the word of God. This is regarded as something rather stupid or silly or foolish, to say that you really keep the word of God, that you really live by the word of God. We are, in general, asked by our society to abandon the Book of Genesis to "science". We are asked to abandon salvation by our redemption through the blood of Christ to anthropology. We are asked to abandon the life of the Holy Spirit, the Christian life through the Spirit taught in the word of God, to modern psychology or Christian psychology. And we are encouraged not to speak of the word of God and to abandon it really to our criticism. So, this is a church with little strength that is there were a few who were there, and our Lord says, they have kept my word and further they have not denied my name. The rallying center was Christ, not the church; the rallying center, our Lord Jesus Christ personally.

Yesterday I was reading a few hymns in an older hymnal, and this was one that was entitled, "A Children's Hymn." And it had a number of stanzas, but this one impressed me, it said, "And when he hung upon the tree, they wrote this name above him talking, of course, about this is Jesus of Nazareth the King, they wrote this name above him that all might see the reason we forevermore must love him. We love to sing around our king and hail him blessed Jesus, for there's no word, ear ever heard, so dear so sweet as Jesus." It's a nice hymn for children to sing, but I doubt that they sing that kind of hymn today. He says, "They have not denied his name."

He has a complaint. "Behold," in the 9th verse, "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The Jews, the unbelieving Jews are to be forced to worship, which I think as I remember the only place in this book in which there is forced worship, but they are forced to worship those who are the genuine believers.

Now in the tenth verse we come to the promise made to the church, and it's the text over which so much discussion has taken place, which we will deal with not only the remainder of this message, but next time as well. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Now, we know that in the evangelical church there has been considerable discussion over the doctrine of the rapture. Let me say, first of all, that the term rapture is not found in the New Testament per se. Rapture, the noun, but the idea is plainly there.

For example, when Paul speaks in 1 Thessalonians 4 about individuals being caught up to meet him, meet the Lord in the air. The term that is used is a term which is rendered in the Latin vulgate by the Latin word *rapeo* which means "to seize or to catch." And it's the word from which we get rapture. That comes from the Latin verb *rapeo*. So, to affirm that the term rapture is not in the New Testament as if to make a doctrinal point

out of it, is thoroughly false, and only reveals a person's ignorance of the New Testament. So, we are going to take the term as being a biblical term, though the term itself is not mentioned. It's the reference to what is meant by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Now you know, those of you who have been in evangelicalism any length of time, know that there is considerable discussion over the relationship of this caught up to meet the Lord in the air to the doctrine of the tribulation, the period of time in the future in which the judgments sets forth in this Book of Revelation are being poured out in fulfillment of the seventieth week of Israel according to Daniel chapter 9. And you know that there are some who teach, this is incidentally a pre-millennialist family quarrel. That is, there are pre-millennialist who believe that our Lord will return before the great judgments that are set forth, and so they know or they speak of a pre-tribulational rapture of the church, caught up before that approximately seven year period of time which is followed by the Messianic or the millennial kingdom upon the earth. Those who are post-tribulationalist believe the church will go through that period of time, though not suffer the wrath of God, will go through that period of time, be preserved through it and at the completion of that seven year period of time they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, but it's after the tribulation. So, it's a post tribulational rapture, both of them believing in a millennial or Messianic kingdom.

Now this particular debate, pre-tribulationism verses post tribulationism is a debate that is filled with confusion and complexity, and in my opinion it's filled with confusion and complexity, because the issue is largely one of inference that is drawn from texts or presumed doctrines. In other words, there isn't any clear text that says our Lord will return after the tribulation. You cannot point to any text like that, and you cannot point to any undisputed text that says that he will return and catch the church up before the tribulation period.

The closest text that is specific on the point is this one in verse 10. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world" -- this is a universal testing so we're not talking about something limited -- "to try them that dwell upon the earth." An expression used in both the Hebrew in Isaiah's apocalypse in the Greek representing this, and here of unbelieving individuals who are on the earth during the time of those great judgments. So, we have a text that refers to the tribulation, but the question is, does our Lord's promise that he will keep them from that hour of trial, is that a pre-tribulational rapture promise? That's the point. It's hard to summarize this in a few sentences, but I'm surprised that I have done so well. It's very plain to me. [Laughter] I hope that you understand.

Now there are a number of arguments on both sides of this issue. I'm going to just summarize those that I think are the most important. We may not have time, but to deal with one of the arguments for pre-tribulationalism. We're going to talk about pre-tribulationalism, and then next Sunday we're going to talk, finish our talk about that and about post-tribulationalism then as well.

The first of the arguments for pre-tribulationism that is often used, sometimes individuals contend that this settles the question, is what may be called the argument from immanency. That is, it is their contention that the Scriptures, when they speak about our Lord's coming quickly, for example the very next verse begins with, "Behold I come quickly." That when the Scriptures speak of our Lord's soon coming or his coming is near, or drawing near as here, "Behold I come quickly," the reference is to an any moment coming of the Lord. That is, he may come at any moment, and that means that he may come the next moment from this very moment which is just past incidentally. He didn't come at that moment, but nevertheless he may come at the next moment. He may come tomorrow morning. He may come next month. So, the argument for immanence by a pre-tribulationalist is that he will come at any moment.

Now this is disputed, of course, by post-tribulationists, because they cannot believe in an any moment coming, but they do have a doctrine of immanency. They believe in immanency too, but they define immanency in a different way. They do not want to relinquish the idea of a near approach of our Lord for Scripture says that, we know that. He speaks about his coming being near. He says here, "I come quickly." So, we have a near coming of the Lord at least set forth in Scripture. So, regardless of our approach to it, we have to account for those expressions, but is it any moment in the sense that we talked? Post tribulationists say, "No, it cannot be that." But one can say there is a possibility that he may come at any time, but time means a relatively short period of time.

Now, I want to suggest to you, not settle this whole issue, but suggest to you the argument for immanency is not a valid argument. That is, pre-tribulationism is not a valid argument, and let me suggest to you why I do not think it is a valid argument. We have a number of verbs, or words, verbs particularly, used in the New Testament to describe the attitude of believers to the coming of the Lord. For example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 7, there is a word that describes the attitude of a believer to the coming of the Lord as one who is to watch or wait for the coming of our Lord; 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 7 says, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." One might say, well doesn't that mean he could come at any moment, but that very word, waiting, that very term, very word, precise word is used of waiting for the redemption of this creation about us.

But we know that that follows after any tribulation periods, so it is obvious that waiting is a term that may imply a lengthy period of time and is not an any-moment kind of thing, because it is used with reference to an event that is after the tribulation period. Maybe that's not absolutely clear to you, let me mention something else. Our Lord told a number of parables and in these parables every now and then, he anticipated that there would be a delay in his coming again. He stated certain things were going to come to

pass before he came again. He said, for example, "There was to be a sowing of the seed," and then he said at the end of the age, certain things would transpire. So, it's obvious that the premises of his coming must be broad enough to include an interval. They cannot be any moment.

Furthermore, he said in Acts chapter 1, verse 8, this is just an illustration of the same kind of thing, in Acts chapter 1, verse 8 he said unto the disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." In other words, there must be a time for the accomplishment of this evangelistic movement that will reach to the ends of the earth. Now Peter, standing there and hearing a promise like this, and having in his mind an any moment coming of the Lord, might well have said to the Lord, which he didn't, but he might well have said to the Lord, "But are we not to understand that your coming is an any moment coming?" And our Lord would have to say, "No Peter, it's not an any-moment coming, because these events must transpire before my coming again." So, I think you can see from this that the argument from immanency is not really a valid, scriptural argument unless you have a broader definition of what immanency is. Then you can talk about immanency, and I think you should talk about immanency, but it should be that which will enable you to comprehend all of the events that properly belong in a true scriptural definition of immanency.

I would like to say that next Sunday I would like to present an argument from the necessity of an interval between the rapture and the advent, an argument for pre-tribulationism, and then an argument from the apocalypse, perhaps, the strongest of the arguments for pre-tribulationism. And we'll discuss that, and then we'll look at a few arguments that post tribulationist offer for their particular doctrine. But, let me underline, what I'm saying to you is only a kind of shallow introduction of the study of an

issue like this, and I hope also we should realize that any kind of theological system that makes as its fundamental teaching, or a fundamental teaching, this particular doctrine, to my mind is going contrary to the great emphases of the word of God. I just do not think that we should make this the touch stone of orthodoxy in evangelicalism. It is not that big an issue in the light of the teaching of the word of God.

And then one final point, I think we should remember as believers that when we talk about pre-tribulationism among pre-millennialism we should remember that there are more things over which we have agreement than there over which we have disagreement. And may the Lord give us the mind to discuss in Christian love, doctrines without affirming the heterodoxy of those who don't agree with us on these smaller, but nevertheless significant points, in the study of the word of God. It's clear that our Lord addresses this church, underlines the importance of fidelity. The test of the church is its loyalty to him and to his word.

The immanency of his coming is something that we hold, when he says, "Behold I come quickly," we are to understand that as suggesting that when the events of the final days begin to transpire, the consummation will come relatively quickly. The issue, of course, for all of us is, are we really anticipating that great event? The apostle wrote to the Thessalonians, and when he wrote to the Thessalonians he described their attitude, and he described their attitude as one with which he was in thorough agreement. He says, "They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." To wait for his Son from heaven is an attitude that all of us as believers should have. May God help us to have that attitude and may we remember that it is he who opens and shuts doors, and he has set a door of opportunity before all of us.

I know that all of you in this auditorium have friends and relatives, very close ones, who do not so far as you can tell, have a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ. Now is the day of salvation. May the Lord give us the mind and heart and motivation to enter the open doors that he constantly provides for us. If you are here today and you've never believed in our Lord, we invite you to turn to him in whom, through his saving sacrifice you may have eternal life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous letters that our Lord has left for the churches, not only those historical churches, and those churches down through the centuries, but for this church, Believers Chapel. Lord, help us to take this as a letter to us and to us individually.

And Father we pray that, for those of us who know the Lord, that we may effectively proclaim him and by Thy grace enter the doors that our sovereign Lord is providing. And for those who may be here without the Lord, oh through the Holy Spirit, Lord, touch their hearts; bring them to conviction of sin and the gift of regeneration in faith. Go with us as we part now in Jesus name. Amen.