

## The Open Door - Revelation 3:7-13

*“I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut.”*

Revelation 3:8

In the early 2000s as social media began to mushroom all over the world, so did a phenomenon known as FOMO—the *fear of missing out*. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok act like magic windows through which we can see how much fun everyone else seems to be having. This produces a deep and desperate feeling that we are always on the outside of the party, missing out. [Symptoms of FOMO](#) include:

- obsessively checking social media
- feeling discontent with your life when you see what others are doing
- overscheduling to make sure you’re always doing something

Obviously, social media does not cause FOMO: it just brings it to the surface. Social media is like hot water in a teacup, drawing out the flavor of the tea leaves—in this case the “flavor” is our dread of standing on the outside of a door we want to be open to us.

It’s worth asking whether this dread points to a deeper hunger—one that can’t be satisfied by getting included in a group of friends or being promoted to a more elite group in the company. Maybe what we are longing for is precisely what Jesus offers to us: to be included in a world of permanent love and acceptance, that is, heaven. (“Behold, a door standing open in heaven!” Revelation 4:1)

In Revelation 3:7-13, Jesus addresses a church that had been shut out. Apparently, some Jews who did not believe in Jesus had refused to let Jesus’ followers access the synagogue. These people had even told Jesus’ followers that God did not love them. Quite literally, the door had been shut and they could not open it. In light of this situation, Jesus presents himself as the one who has the key to God’s royal palace (“the key of David”). “I am the one who opens the door,” Jesus assures them, “and what I open, no one can shut.”

Although there are several themes woven throughout this passage, we will deal with the one suggested by the metaphor of the key and the door—having access to God’s permanent love and acceptance.

### **1. Our need for an open door (Revelation 3:7-9).**

*We need access to God.*

The situation of the Philadelphian church is suggested by Jesus’ words in Revelation 3:8-9. People who claimed to be God’s people (“Jews”) had shut them out of the synagogue, their place of worship. It was either stated or strongly implied that Jesus’ followers were unloved (3:9).

It feels terrible to be shut out from love and safety. Throughout the Old Testament, exile and alienation are common metaphors for the effect of sin. Because of sin, humans are alienated from God. We feel this alienation even when we are not able to put our finger on what causes it.

### **2. The possibility of an open door (Revelation 3:7-9).**

*Access to God has been made possible through Jesus Christ.*

Jesus claimed to have “the key of David,” which is an allusion to a prophecy from 800 years prior (Isaiah 22:22). A man named Eliakim was installed to be the equivalent of our Secretary of State. He held the key to the king’s palace, which meant that he, and he alone, could grant access to the throne room of the king.

Jesus is drawing on this ancient prophecy to make a radical claim about himself: as the keyholder, he is the one who can grant anyone access to God’s kingdom of permanent love. No matter who shuts you out, if Jesus opens up to you, you will always be granted access.

We must go back earlier in the book of Revelation to understand *how* Jesus came to procure that authority. In chapter 1, he presents himself as holding the keys to Death. If death is a prison—ultimate exclusion and alienation—Jesus is the hero who stormed that prison, knocked out the jailer, grabbed the keys, and came back out (Revelation 1:18). The key that unlocks the jail cell of death also unlocks the door to heaven, and it is that key that Jesus holds because he died and came back alive.

### **3. Living before the open door (Revelation 3:9-13)**

*Having access to God informs the way we live and welcome others.*

Jesus’ words in these verses are meant to assure the church of validation, protection, permanence, and identity. They are *validated* because, contrary to the claims of their opponents, Jesus really *does* love them (3:9). They are *protected* because Jesus will keep them from a time of impending world-wide testing (3:10). He also gives them *permanence*—like immovable pillars in a temple. Finally, he grants them *identity* as belonging forever to Jesus because he will inscribe on them the name of God, of God’s city, and of Jesus himself.

Even though the “open door” refers to our permanent access to heaven we can also infer from this our responsibility to open this door to others.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus had told his followers “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). In an astonishing twist, we are to realize that the “keys of the kingdom” are in our possession as well! Not that we have personal authority to grant people access to God: rather, by pointing people to Jesus, we are, in effect, opening the door to heaven for them.

### **Application Questions**

1. How does FOMO echo something deeper in human nature that predates social media? In what ways have you personally experienced or witnessed the impact of FOMO on mental health or personal well-being?
2. What other clues do you see that humans are longing to be on the “inside” of something they have been excluded from?
3. Suppose you had been excluded from a place of worship—a place where you access God’s presence. Then suppose that you heard Jesus’ assurance that he alone is the one who opens the door to heaven. What effect would that have on your mind and emotions?
4. Of the four assurances discussed above (validation, protection, permanence, and identity) which one(s) do you find currently most precious and needful, and what makes it so?
5. The way to heaven is presented as an open door. What are some unfortunate ways Christians might misrepresent the door as closed? How can we as individuals and as a church do a better job showing and telling people that this door is open to include anyone who will come?

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<sup>1</sup>Paul and Luke use the picture of an open door to refer to missionary opportunities for sharing the gospel in 1 Corinthians 16:8-9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3; Acts 14:27; and 2 Corinthians 2:12.