Series: Letters from Jesus (a study in Revelation)
Sermon Text: Revelation 3:7-13 (Video 13:25-17:13) **Key Word(s):** Disasters, Persecution

Poll

- How necessary are things like buildings, atmosphere, and social acceptance to our worship? A) Extremely B) Moderately C) Neutral D) Not at all
- 1st century Christians worshipped in: A) Synagogues B) Temples C) Homes

Since we'll be taking breaks during our Revelation study, we're building a summary paragraph to remind us of what this book is about. So, our first summary sentence says: "*Revelation is about what Jesus has been up to since His resurrection, and specifically how He is intimately involved with His churches.*" Each week in this series called, "*Letters from Jesus*", someone will join me to share their research relevant to each church. Today, my partner is Lisa Houchin, and our study of the letter from Jesus to the church in ***Philadelphia*** will ultimately reveal this…

BIG IDEA: Christ's Spirit empowers churches to endure disasters and persecution.

Lisa will start with some history of the Asian city of ***Philadelphia***. This city was founded in 189 BC by two brothers Attalus II and Eumenes II. Eumenes was a king with no heir to the throne, so it went to his brother whom he really loved, hence the city of brotherly love. Philadĕlphŏsis in Greek means "*one who loves his brother*." One of the reasons that Brandon chose me to discuss Philadelphia is because I was born in the U.S. city of Philadelphia, so now I am going to tell you why we call our US city Philadelphia. First, the Quakers who founded it wanted the city to be known for love and inclusion of all religions. Second, Philadelphia represented faithfulness to many churches who really wanted that name to mean something. The Asian city of ***Philadelphia*** is the newest city of all the cities we are talking about during this study. Like the other cities it was beautiful and had many beautiful buildings. It was considered the gateway to Asia, a very important trade route.

In the previous letter to Sardis, we learned how the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a unique and distinct message that can be upsetting to powerful governments and other religions. It offers salvation to all types of people but exclusively through repentance of sin and faith in King Jesus. This was an unpopular message at a time when Rome demanded allegiance to the emperor and their many gods. Multi-god (polytheistic) religions fit right into this culture, but Judaism was a one-God (monotheistic) religion which Rome tolerated so long as they didn't cause trouble. Rome initially viewed Christians as a sect of Judaism until ***Jewish synagogues*** started ***shutting out*** those who accepted Jesus as Israel's Messiah, which caused Christians to be marginalized and to lose opportunities. In ***Philadelphia***, the powerful

Roman Empire controlled everything, and the ***Jewish Synagogue*** was given limited religious authority. So, imagine being a Christian who didn't worship in Rome's massive temples or Judaism's sizeable ***synagogues***, but instead had to worship in someone's living room! That's how most 1st century churches worshipped--no large buildings, bands, or other gimmicks, just a few folks gathered like exiles without a home. The 1st century Christian church never felt large or powerful, which begs the question: "*Why do some believers feel unable to worship in less ideal settings, and how have things like large buildings, entertaining church programs, and political power become must-have idols?*"

Let's read what Jesus said in ***verses 7-8***: ***And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: The words of the holy one*** (suggesting Jesus is equal with God-ultimate power cf. 6:10)***, the true one*** (as opposed to the fake Jews addressed in ***verse 9***)***, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name***. Who can tell us what ***keys*** are used for? They open or grant access to things (so, ***open door*** isn't a reference to witnessing here). Growing up, it always felt like school janitors held the most power since administrators had to find them to gain access to certain places. In the Bible, "***keys***" speak of authority like when Jesus said in chapter 1, "*I have the keys of death and hades*." The phrase, "***key of David***" is used in Isaiah and in Revelation to denote dominion promised to the family of Israel's King David, which includes Jesus and His Messianic kingdom (cf. Mark 12:35; Luke 1:32). ***Verse 7*** is a direct quote from Isaiah 22 which spoke of 2 servants who controlled access to the king--God replaced one servant who was consumed with self and earthly cares with an eternally minded servant who sought the welfare of others. Check out what Jesus told His followers in John 16:1-4: "*I've said these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they've not known the Father, nor me. I've said these things so that when it comes, you'll remember what I've said.*" (cf. John 9:22, 12:42). As this occurred in ***Philadelphia***, Jesus assured the marginalized church by saying, "***I have the key of David***", which implied, "*I am the good servant who holds authority over Rome, the* ***synagogue****, and access to God*" (cf. John 14:6). This speaks volumes to U.S. Christians after pandemic and political maneuvers have unmasked powerful people who seek to ***shut us out*** of societal privileges that 1st century church could only dream of! Church leaders are now asking, "*Can our church formats survive the loss of buildings and social acceptance?*"

Let's consider something else Lisa discovered about this ancient city. It was on a very large fault line and prone to earthquakes. ***Philadelphia*** was decimated by one in 17 AD. By this time, of course, Rome was in control and Emperor Tiberius gave them 5 years of not paying taxes so they could rebuild. As time went on, the Romans needed more grain to feed the people in the ever-growing empire. Grain is just as important today as it was then because a country that can't feed its people won't last long. For example, The United States can feed their own people with no help from anyone else if they had too. Rome, however, made ***Philadelphia*** rip out their olive trees and grapevines which were very important to their economy. They hated the Romans for this because their soil wasn't right for grain, and it hurt their economy. As time went on, another major earthquake decimated ***Philadelphia***. It remained a Christian city for many years but eventually was taken by the Muslims. All that's left of the city are the remains of the Basilica of John. The city has moved to the West and is now called Alaşehir.

Finally, consider how what Jesus said to Christians in ***Philadelphia*** was a stunning reversal of how Judaism interpreted God's Old Testament promises to Israel. Look at ***verse 9***: ***Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not but lie*** (Jewish-born folks who reject Jesus as Israel's Messiah) ***--behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you***. Jesus was saying, "*I will ultimately vindicate you!*" just like His Father used to tell the faithful in Old Testament Israel (cf. Psalm 86:9; Isaiah 45:14, 49:23, 60:14). Again, this implies that God's promises to Israel are being continued through the church, which leaves us wondering whether He's done with the nation of Israel…but that's not the point here (cf. Romans 9-11). Jesus was simply telling this scattered and battered ***Philadelphia church*** that, despite all appearances, they were on the right track and must stay the course as we see in ***verses 10-13***: ***Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers*** (stays faithful in the face of disasters and persecution)***, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God*** (imagine how such phrases of stability and security landed in a city known for earthquakes and fallen architecture)***. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches***. If you don't know, Jesus was repeating stuff His Father had said to Old Testament Israel to assure this New Testament church that, "*You may be **shut out** of societal privileges in Rome and the religious prestige of the **Jewish synagogue**, but I will ultimately make you **pillars in God's true***

temple." Surprisingly, Revelation 21 reveals that this final temple isn't a building--it says the "*temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb*", and apparently believers will somehow be its ***pillars***.

Let's pray: Father, in a world where bigger is seen as better and Christians wrongly put their hope in political power, physical structures, and social acceptance, Your Word says that security, stability, and success are only found in Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. It's also interesting to learn how trials, persecution, and natural disasters have been happening ever since Jesus founded the church--they are nothing new. Just like the church in Philadelphia, we must endure them by faith rather than by freaking out and compromising. May your Spirit give us the resolve to **endure disasters, persecution**, and whatever else comes our way by proclaiming the truth that anyone can become a stable pillar in Your eternal temple by believing in Your Son, the true Messiah (Christ) of Heaven and Earth. Amen.

Considerations for discussion leaders:
1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Preparing for and applying our sermon from Revelation 3:7-13.

During this series it would help to repeatedly read over the chapter we're exploring. It would also be beneficial to utilize a commentary that explains the various interpretive strategies used throughout church history. If you need a suggestion, please ask! We should also be thinking about our "*next step*" in our relationship with Jesus. The Bible isn't meant simply to "*inform*" but to also "*transform*", and a next step always begins with faith in Christ--either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Our help comes through Christ's Spirit and His church body!

Specific application questions (Don't forget the underlined questions in the sermon notes above!):

- How might powerful people threaten the lives and livelihood of Christians today, and are we prepared to not deny the name of Jesus when they do?
- What sorts of things did the 2020 pandemic teach us about the need for churches to be flexible in areas that we often view as worship "essentials/non-negotiables"?
- What does this letter say to believers or churches when we feel small, insignificant, powerless, or outnumbered?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- Joe Stowell's tour of Philadelphia from Our Daily Bread
- About the church in Philadelphia from The BEMA Discipleship Podcast
- How Greeks and Romans came up with their gods and goddesses

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Founding of Philadelphia**: "The youngest of the seven cities, Philadelphia sat a little more than thirty miles east-southeast of Sardis. Although its origins are a bit obscure, it was apparently founded during the early second century BCE, at the height of the Attalid (Pergameme) control of Anatolia. It was named after Attalus II, fifth successor to the throne in Pergamum, who came to that position after the death of his brother, to whom he had shown such remarkable loyalty that he had received the name Philadelphus. It was most likely founded as an outpost city, thus securing Hellenistic influence over local peoples in the area. Its location secured for it a long history after our period. Nestled as it was at the southern edge of a level river basin, it sat astraddle the main routes north and south, and at the head of a large plain of lava deposit soil that was perfect for vineyards. The most important feature of the town, however, was its location almost atop the fault responsible for the severe earthquake noted above regarding Sardis (17 CE), of which Strabo writes just a few years later, "Philadelphia has not even its walls secure, but they are daily shaken and split in some degree. The people continually pay attention to earth-tremors and plan their buildings with this factor in mind." And later, beyond the Lydians are the Mysians and the city of Philadelphia, full of earthquakes, for the walls never cease being cracked, and different parts of the city are constantly suffering damage. That is why the actual town has few inhabitants, but the majority live as farmers in the countryside, as they have fertile land. But one is surprised even at the few, that they are so fond of the place when they have such insecure dwellings. And one would be even more amazed at those who founded it. The result was that the emperor Tiberius actually let them off paying taxes for one five-year period, until they could recover adequately from earthquake damage." (Fee, 50)
- **Isaiah 22**: "What does it mean to be an Eliakim rather than a Shebna? Above everything else, it means that we have gotten ourselves off our hands. That's the difference between a David and a Saul, or a Jesus and a Judas. The second person in each of these pairs was always looking out for himself. He was worried about his image, about what other people thought of him, about how he was going to supply his needs, and about how people would remember him. These were the last things the first person in each pair worried about…This is the opportunity Christ offers each of us. We may chose to be Eliakim or Shebna. We may focus on the temporal or the eternal. If we focus on the temporal, we and all our works will perish with the temporal. If we choose the eternal, then none of our temporal works will ever be lost (Rom. 8:13). Furthermore, like Eliakim and the apostles after him, we will be given the authority to open the doors of heaven for those who will never get in otherwise (Matt. 16:19; cf. also Rev. 3:7). More frighteningly, we will have the authority to close the doors for those who are trying to get in for all the wrong reasons. There is power, but it is only gotten by renouncing power and all its trappings." (Oswalt, 268-269)
- **Son of David**: "The most common expectation about the messiah—from Isaiah into the rabbinic period—was that he would emerge from the Davidic line. It does not emerge as a title in a messianic context until the first century BC in the Psalms of Solomon. That it is spoken by the scribes in Mark 12:35 indicates its status as a common Jewish expectation in the first century AD (Fuller, The Foundations, 33). Both canonical birth stories mark Jesus' Davidic Sonship. The two genealogies are meaningful as indicators of blood descent from David. In Luke, it is foretold that He will be given the throne of David and rule over Israel forever (Luke 1:32–33). In Matthew, He is given the title King of the Jews and His birth in Bethlehem is connected to a Davidic prophecy (Mic 5:2) (Hahn, The Titles of Jesus, 265). The Christological formula in Rom 1:3 indicates an early attribution of Davidic sonship to Jesus. Beyond the birth story, only Matthew

has a keen interest in using Son of David—six instances are demonstrably the evangelists' own additions (Kingsbury, "Title 'Son of David,'" 591–92)." (The Lexham Bible Dictionary)

- **Open Door**: "Jesus acknowledges that the church at Philadelphia has little power, yet it has kept (cf. 1:3) his word (3:10: word of endurance; cf. 2:2, 3) and has not denied his name (3:8; cf. 2:13). As a result, he has set before the church an 'open door' (3:8). It is unlikely that the expression refers to a missionary opportunity (cf. 2 Cor 2:12); Revelation shows little interest in such matters. More likely is that the expression has to do with access to God. The same expression is used in 4:1, where John, seeing an open door in heaven, is caught up (presumably through that door) into heaven. The other use of 'door' in Revelation is in 3:20, where Jesus refers to a door through which he will enter to eat with 'anyone' who opens it. The church at Philadelphia has little power; hence, Jesus himself has opened the door that enables its members to fellowship with God. Since he has the key of David, no one is able to shut the door (3:7–8)." (Trafton, 48)
- **KEYS in Scripture**: "KEY[Heb maptē (a)ḥ; Gk. kleís]. In Mt. 16:19 the expression 'keys of the kingdom' is employed to denote the authority committed by Jesus Christ to His disciples (cf. Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:22f.). In the book of Revelation, He is depicted as holding 'the key of David' and 'the keys of hell and of death' (Rev. 1:18; 3:7; cf. 9:1; 20:1). The rabbis spoke of four keys in the hand of God alone, including that of death. In Isa. 22:22 Eliakim prefigures Christ as being entrusted with 'the key of the house of David.' It is laid upon his shoulder, where the long and heavy keys of the past were carried…What Isaiah had in mind no doubt is the grand vizier or majordomo, into whose hands is committed 'unlimited authority over the royal household, carrying with it a similar influence in all affairs of state' (J. Skinner, Isaiah [1915], I, 170). Jewish commentaries usually interpreted the Eliakim passage as referring to the Messiah. It speaks of Him as 'the Heir and Lord of the abiding theocracy' and is clearly related to Rev. 3:7; the reference in each to opening and shutting makes the identification complete. 3:7 and the other verses in Revelation that mention the keys imply that the supreme power and the one true key belong to Christ alone. Only He possesses the key by right. He may, however, bestow it on others for use (Rev. 9:1; 20:1). That the keys have a connection with doctrine as well as with the destiny of souls is evident from Lk. 11:52. There Jesus castigates the lawyers because they have 'taken away the key of knowledge'—that is, of the Scriptures, which are able to make men wise to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). The function of the scribes was to unlock the Word, so that others might be brought to a knowledge of the truth. Instead, by their concentration on the secondary and the peripheral, they locked the book and threw away the key (G. B. Caird, Luke [1964], p. 159). The delivery of a key was part of the scribe's ordination." (Wood, 10)
- **Israel and the church**: "These verses use passages from Isaiah to show that the church is the continuation of the true Israel in God's covenant purposes. Eliakim, the de facto ruler of Israel, becomes a type of Christ. The pagan Gentiles of Isaiah now depict the unbelieving Israel of John's day. And the local Jewish community in Philadelphia is depicted as a synagogue of Satan. Yet in the midst of this, God is about to do a saving work among the Jewish people there, with the result that they will acknowledge the church as the 'true' synagogue. Examine these verses in light of Rom. 9:6, 24–26 and Gal. 3:16, 29: Do the Romans, Galatians, and Revelation 3 passages shed light on each other's meaning? As Revelation progresses, keep an eye out for how the theme of the church as fulfilling the promises of Israel is further developed." (Beale, 88-89)
- **The situation in Philadelphia**: "Judaism was a protected religion in the Roman Empire. As long as Christianity could claim an association with Judaism, it was exempt from emperor worship. But the Jews in Philadelphia were now officially repudiating the church, setting the Christians adrift to face Roman persecution. Against such a 'shutting out,' Jesus opens a door. Jesus'

promise is that he will make the Jews 'come and bow down before your feet' (3:9), a clear allusion to Old Testament promises given to Israel about Gentiles coming and bowing down before them (e.g., Ps 86:9; Isa 45:14; 49:23; 60:14). The irony is clear. Gentiles will not come and bow down before the Jews; rather, the Jews will come and bow down before the true Israel—i.e., the Church. Once again, the reader encounters the theme that the Church is the true Israel (see on 2:9). Jesus adds that the reason for this reversal lies in himself: they will 'learn that I have loved you' (3:9; cf. 1:5; Isa 43:3–4)." (Trafton, 48)

- **Size dynamics**: "We should not imagine a 'church' on one street corner and a 'synagogue' on another, as in many cities today. We should imagine a Jewish community of several thousand, with its own buildings and community life, and a church of probably two or three dozen at most, holding on to the highly improbable, and extremely risky, claim that the God of Israel had raised Jesus from the dead. That imbalance goes some way to help us explain what is now being said." (Wright, 34)
- **The excluded need Christian fellowship**: "The Christians in Philadelphia have become broken by their exclusion from the synagogue, hence from their heritage. Faithfulness often means being excluded from circles that mean much to us—sometimes even from family. Those who have grown up in Christian homes or have families in a church may not recognize the need of single Christians or Christians in religiously mixed marriages to experience Christian family ties in the church, especially if such people have experienced rejection for the gospel's sake from their family of origin." (Keener, 155)
- **A stunning role reversal**: "What is more (this is where the Philadelphia letter goes beyond the Smyrna one), there will be a dramatic reversal of roles. In Malachi (1:2) God declares to rebellious Israel, 'I have loved you', contrasting Israel, the descendants of Jacob, with Edom, the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. Now we have a similar contrast: the unbelieving synagogue will realize that Jesus, their own Messiah, has loved this little group that believes in him. And, whereas ancient prophecy had spoken of times when foreign nations would come and bow before the people of Israel, acknowledging that the one true God was with them, now it's going to be the other way round. Like Joseph's brothers in Genesis 42, the Jewish people will bow down before the Jesus they had previously despised. Eventually it will be clear that the followers of Jesus are the ones who can go through the open door, the ones who are to be pillars in the new temple." (Wright, 35)
- **True Israel**: "The biblical prophets had promised God's people that the Gentiles would one day bow down to them (Isa. 60:14; cf. 45:14; 49:23; cf. 45:23; 49:7; 66:23), as Jewish tradition also recognized (1 Enoch 90:30; 1QM 12.14). But here unbelieving Jews join unbelieving Gentiles in bowing down before the faithful believers (Rev. 3:9). They must recognize that God has chosen his people (Isa. 49:7) and that he loves them (43:4; esp. Mal. 1:2). As those whom Jesus loves, they are the destined inhabitants of 'the city he loves' (Rev. 20:9). What marks them as Christ's people is that they have 'kept' or guarded his word (3:10; cf. 1:3; 2:26; 3:3, 8; 12:17; 14:12; 16:15; 22:7, 9); he will thus guard them." (Keener, 150-151)
- **Earthquakes**: "Central Turkey, in the first century…was notorious for its earthquakes. Philadelphia had suffered one of the worst ones, fifty or more years before this book was written. Much of the city had been destroyed and had had to be rebuilt with a grant from the emperor. In a great city of that day, the fine public buildings would be particularly dangerous in such a crisis. Small, poor family homes might escape the worst of the damage; but imagine those splendid works of ancient architecture, civic structures and, not least, temples (of which ancient cities had plenty). Imagine the tall pillars shaking, cracking and then buckling as a huge marble pediment

came crashing down. Not a good place to be. Now imagine the effect, in a city like Philadelphia that knew plenty about earthquakes and collapsed temples, of promising the church there that those who conquered would be made pillars in the temple of God (verse 12). No stone, no marble will be involved: this, as in the writings of Paul and Peter, is a 'temple' made of living human beings, with Jesus himself as the foundation. This imagery was used from the earliest days of Christian faith. The first Christians, partly because of Jesus and partly because of the gift of the spirit, regarded themselves as the true Temple, the place where the living God had made his home. Sometimes the Jerusalem leaders had themselves been called 'pillars' (Galatians 2:9). But now it is the ordinary Christians in Philadelphia, far away from Jerusalem, who are to be 'pillars'—in a city notorious for danger from earthquakes! A promise to cherish." (Wright, 33-34)

- **Earthquakes and small population**: "The city of Philadelphia had a relatively small population in John's day, due to the fear of earthquakes, with which the city was plagued. Historically, the inhabitants had frequently been forced to move out of the city due to its instability. Philadelphia had been destroyed by earthquake in A.D. 17, and even though it had been rebuilt, many people still were fearful about living in town and remained instead in the surrounding countryside. For this reason, the church there may have been small, though it remained a significant church in the region at least until the 12th century, and a small congregation is said to be in that location to this day." (Gregg, 75)
- **Crowns and overcoming**: "The 'crown' is a victor's wreath appropriate to overcomers (see comments on 2:10, where the crown of life contrasts with the second death in 2:11), and losing it means roughly the same as the warning to the preceding church: exclusion from the kingdom (3:5). Those who do overcome, however, will not only be welcome in Jesus' household, God's temple; they will constitute a part of it (3:12). Thus, though expelled from 'Satan's synagogue' (3:9), they remain in God's temple." (Keener, 151)
- **Overcomers, Pillars, and seals**: "The overcomer will be made a pillar in the temple of My God (v. 12). Assuming a familiarity with the concept of the church being the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5), faithful confessors will possess positions of stability and support. Such pillars are earthquake-proof, so that, unlike the citizens of Philadelphia, who had frequently been driven out of their city by quakes, the overcomer shall go out no more. Three inscriptions will be written upon the believer who endures: (1) the name of My God, and (2) the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, and (3) My new name (v. 12). Having the name of God and of Christ written upon oneself is probably like a slave bearing the brand of his master. Further along, we will hear an angel expressing concern that the judgments not begin until 'we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads' (7:3). Those thus sealed are later seen to have the 'Father's name written on their foreheads' (14:1)—a contrast to those who have the name/mark of the beast upon their foreheads (13:16ff). Such a mark on the believer is not a visible tattoo, but the seal of God's ownership, a concept Paul equates with the believer's possession of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). The writing of the New Jerusalem upon the believer suggests citizenship there (cf. Ps. 87:5–6). This Jerusalem is described in symbolic detail in chapter 21." (Gregg, 77)

Quotes related to the larger context:

- **Revelation means Apocalypse**: "1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ. The word 'revelation' (or 'apocalypse'; Gk. apokalypsis) expresses the subject and nature of the book. The book is a heightened form of prophecy, which can be referred to as 'apocalyptic,' as apparent from the use of 'revelation' and 'prophecy' in vv. 1–3 and in 22:7. John begins by describing his vision as a

revelation that 'God gave him to show his servants the things that must soon take place.' The roots of this verse are in Dan. 2:28–30, 45–47, where in two Gk. translations of the OT (the Septuagint and Theo dotion), the verb "revealed" appears five times, the verb "show" twice and the phrase "what must come to pass" three times. The key to understanding the significance of these allusions is that Daniel is speaking of the kingdom of God that will come to pass in the latter days. But what Daniel explicitly states will come to pass 'in the latter days,' John rewords: these events will take place 'soon.' These words do not connote the speedy manner in which the Daniel prophecy is to be fulfilled, nor the mere possibility that it could be fulfilled at any time, but the definite, imminent time of fulfillment, which has already begun in the present through the death and resurrection of Christ. The time of waiting is over, and God is conducting the final phase of His victorious warfare against evil. By such reckoning, today is "the last hour" (1 John 2:18)." (Sproul, 2305)

- **Discerning the Purpose of Revelation**: "As we've already noted, most people interpret the book of Revelation as a kind of advance DVD of the end of the world. The focus of the book, they think, is eschatology, the last things. In a sense, of course, eschatology is indeed a focus of the last book of the Bible, but in a profound sense eschatology is not the ultimate focus of Revelation. Rather, as in the rest of Scripture, the eschatology we find in Revelation is a means to an end. Its intention is to give hope to people in trying and/or tempting times so that they will remain faithful to their covenant commitment to God. In other words, the purpose of the book of Revelation is to persuade its hearers and readers, both ancient and contemporary, to remain faithful to God despite past, present, or possible future suffering—whatever form that suffering might take, and whatever source it may have—simply for being faithful. Despite memory, fear, or experience Revelation tells us that covenant faithfulness is possible because of Jesus and worthwhile because of the glorious future God has in store for us and for the entire created order." (Gorman, 74)
- **The genres of Revelation**: "To be sure, most of Revelation belongs to a mixture of apocalyptic and prophetic genres, some of whose symbols have proved more difficult to fathom than others; letters, however, are usually a different kind of literature. Most apocalyptic writings used pseudonyms for their authors and did not explicitly address a particular audience. But Revelation is different, framed as a letter. That it is a letter to specific first-century churches suggests the degree to which we should interpret the symbolism of this book in light of symbols these churches would have understood." (Keener, 74)

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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