

The Awakening

OPEN17: AWAKEN TO OPPORTUNITIES

Terry R. Baughman

“Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:11–12).

For a brief window at the end of one year and the beginning of the new there is an acute awareness of time. As we turn the calendar page, toss out the outdated documents, and adjust to writing a new number for the year in our correspondence we are forced to consider the passage of time.

Through much of the year time passes without much notice. Schedules and deadlines, appointments and events, workplace drama and vacation planning occupy our thinking with little regard to the passage of days, weeks and months. If anything we rush the calendar and push the clock to get to the more enjoyable events in our planning calendar.

At the close of the year we are given an opportunity to consider the moment, reflect on our progress, and evaluate our future ambitions. It's a perfect time to establish some new spiritual goals as we consider our past progression. We have a new opportunity for a fresh start. Wipe the slate clean and determine our destiny toward the future.

Paul wrote that it is time to wake up from sleep. *Recognizing the time* is more than observing the markings on a clock's face. We must be aware of where we are prophetically and through the lens of God's calendar focus on where we are on the timeline of eternal events. It is time to arise to the challenge of God's purpose, *“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light”* (Romans 13:12 NIV). Awaken to the opportunities before us. Recognize that God is with us and He has a plan for our generation in this New Year!

There is a certain excitement and perhaps a bit of trepidation over the uncertainties of the future. There will be challenges. We have never faced such a secular society with so little tolerance for traditional values on a biblical foundation. On the other hand, there is the confident assurance that God is in charge. He will perform His good pleasure. God has a plan to save the lost and has destined victory for the Church that keeps His Word and will not deny His name. (See Revelation 3:8.) There is an OPEN door for the church in this new year. It is an OPEN door by Deity, one of decision, duty, and destiny.

Awaken! Don't be afraid to step through the door that God has opened.
He is with us and nothing shall be impossible!

Scripture:

“Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23).

1/1/17 New Year (New)

An Open Door of Deity

OPEN17: AWAKEN TO GOD'S INTERVENTION

Terry R. Baughman

“I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3:8).

God is active in the affairs of humanity. He is involved in our lives and is Divine providence in our destiny. Opportunities come, not by chance, but by the sovereign will of Deity. God is in charge of the door. He opens door and He closes them. No one else can open the door that He has shut, or shut the door that He opens.

Some say, “When the door is closed, look for a window.” It makes a nice saying for resourcefulness and initiative. However, when it comes to the things of the Spirit there is no window for an alternative entrance. It is always best to wait until God opens the door. Only the eternal God knows the end from the beginning. Only God knows the proper time to open a door and grant access into our destiny.

The prophet Isaiah said, *“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).* We can be in the will of God even when we are waiting for an opportunity to arise. The waiting can be a time of reflection, preparation, and renewal. Allow God to prepare you for the *eventual* while you are in the here and now.

Trust is the key to finding the open door. Knowing that God is in control of our lives and every other situation gives us confidence to trust in Him. The wise man said, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).*

Awaken to God's intervention. Only God can create a divine intersection for an arranged meeting with Deity. When we acknowledge that God is in control then we can rest in Him and wait for His leading, His timing, and His intervention in the challenging situations that life brings to us. It only takes a sovereign intervention to accomplish the impossible.

We are a part of the church that was described as the church in Philadelphia in the book of Revelation. Jesus said, *“You have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3:8).* Here was a people that were promised an open door of deity, *“I have set before you an open door.”* When God opens the door there is abundant blessing awaiting. Whatever you pray for know that God hears. He may not always give us everything that we have asked for, but He will hear and in the appropriate time He will open the right door. When He steps in there is no doubt of His intervention, and we can confidently step into the future of opportunity and blessing.

There will always be the temptation to try the latch and jiggle the handle in the hope that the door is unlocked and just waiting our push. However, when we learn to wait He will open the door and there will be no question or hesitation that this is God's door. Awaken to the opportunities. Awaken to the open door of Deity. Awaken to God's intervention!

Scripture:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, ... acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

1/8/17 Student Sunday (New)

An Open Door of Decision

OPEN17: AWAKEN TO THE MISSION

Terry R. Baughman

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

Christ is a gentleman. He is not an intruder bursting suddenly into our private space demanding service. Even though He has every right to invade our space and require our allegiance He always allows us to make those decisions. Jesus holds all power in the universe. He is the creator of heaven and earth, yet He grants us free will and the right to choose our response to His invitation to relationship.

In John’s vision He saw Christ as the one standing at the door and knocking. He is not pushing His way in, but patiently waiting for *anyone* to hear his voice and open the door. At our invitation He will come in and commune with us. He desires relationship with His creation, but will always wait for a willing heart and a ready response to His gentle knock.

The door swings both ways. Jesus opens doors and grants opportunity, but we must respond by opening the door to relationship and growth. He makes it possible and we concede to His invitation. Without Him we can do nothing. Without us He has chosen to limit Himself. The prophet mournfully cried, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* Then he quickly answered the commissioning call, *“Here am I! Send me”* (Isaiah 6:8).

In Christ there is both invitation and commission. He extends an invitation, *“Come, follow Me,”* then awaits our response. When we respond positively to His invitation, He then delivers a call and commission. We will never feel the divine imperative of the commission until we submit to His invitation and surrender to His call to service. We choose our responses to both follow Him *and* to obey His call to discipleship.

The commission is clear, *“Go and make disciples”* (Matthew 28:19). Arise to the challenge of the open door. It is an *open door* of decision. We are never pushed through the door, kicking and screaming in opposition. Rather, Jesus is again at the door beckoning us to enter into a new realm of possibilities, inviting us to pass from the place of limited vision and infantile faith into the reality of God’s plan for us. So much more exists through the open door. Jesus is the one, *“who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,”* (Ephesians 3:20).

Never fear the open door and the unknown corners in the future passage. The one who goes before us and beckons us to follow knows the path and directs our steps. Awaken, arise, and accept the mission. Remember His promises: *“I will make you fishers of men”* (Matthew 4:19), *“I will build My church”* (Matthew 16:18), and *“all things are possible to him who believes”* (Mark 9:23).

Awaken to the mission. He would have never called us to do the impossible. Those whom He calls He will also enable. Say *yes* to the open door!

Scripture:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, ...” (Matthew 28:19).

1/15/17 Missions Sunday (New)

An Open Door of Duty

OPEN17: AWAKEN TO SERVICE

Terry R. Baughman

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23).

The common call of discipleship is, *“Come, follow me!”* Jesus established the pattern and extended the call to each of His disciples. He further clarified the extent of the commitment when He issued the imperative, *“Take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”* It’s not enough to just accept Him, there is a volitional response to His invitation. We must *follow* Him!

To *follow* Him is to *be like Him!* Emulate His example; adopt His attributes; imitate His actions. The call to discipleship is the challenge to become a disciple, forsaking our pre-determined will and all selfish agendas. It is a call to forsake all else, to follow Him.

Jesus said, *“Follow Me, and I will make you ...”* (Matthew 4:19). He has a plan for your life. Before the foundation of the world there was a lamb slain for the sins of the world and a divine design for all who would embrace the atonement and surrender to His defined destiny. The blueprint is drawn and the materials are accessible for the construction.

Jesus is the *Way*, and His path of discipleship is an avenue of service. He will show us the way as we seek Him. It is our privilege, our opportunity, and our responsibility to serve in His Kingdom. It is our duty, an open door of obligation. The open door of duty is the *service entrance* rather than the regal entry by the great hall of prominence. Some may disdain the passage and feel that a royal son should not come by such a humble access. However, we must remember that this was His entrance. He *“made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men”* (Philippians 2:7). This is the way He walked and the path He chose for us. The *service entrance* provides direct access into His presence.

Jesus was our example in service. He *“did not come to be served, but to serve”* (Matthew 20:28). He has equipped us and enabled us not to just build up our self-image or to impress others, but that we may be empowered to *serve* beyond our natural ability or inclination. If Jesus, the Lord of Glory, did not come to be adored, served, and accommodated, how much more should we seek to give of ourselves to satisfy the needs of those who wish to find Him.

Awaken to service. The old excuses of why it is impossible to serve are no longer adequate. Inaction and inability are no longer valid reasons to neglect the duties of discipleship. An attitude of service is all that is needed to find more opportunities to serve. From a *listening ear* to *manual labor* anyone can find meaningful ways to serve in the Kingdom. With a fresh look, a ready mind, and a willing heart, seize the opportunities that God has placed before us, beyond the open door of duty.

Scripture:

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

1/22/17 Service Sunday (New)

An Open Door of Destiny

OPEN17: AWAKEN TO YOUR PURPOSE

Terry R. Baughman

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this’ (Revelation 4:1).

Have you ever been tantalized with the prospects of knowing the future? The psychics and charlatans offer insights into your future for a price. Some are taken in and cling to the prophetic vision of the forecaster.

What John saw was more than wistful escape from his present circumstances. Exiled on a barren island, the aging disciple was given numerous visions by God’s special gift revealing future events for the church, Israel, and for the nations of the world. It was an open door in heaven, a divine access into things to come. The trumpeting voice proclaimed, *“I will show you things which must take place after this”* (Revelation 4:1). After two thousand years there are still events taking place that John saw and recorded in the Book of Revelation.

The church of Philadelphia was promised an *open door*, a supernatural access into spiritual fulfillment. The divine initiative revealing the portal of opportunity was in response to some important core values of the church of Philadelphia. Jesus said they *“have kept My word, and have not denied My name”* (Revelation 3:8). Surely this access into future potential stands wide open for a church today who embraces the same values as this church in biblical prophecy. Those who hold the Word of God in great regard and follow its teaching fervently, those who remain fiercely loyal to their commitment to the name of Jesus Christ, never bowing to contemporary trends of inclusive speech, will find themselves standing in this unique position of opportunity.

The future is not a place to fear, though the unknown often causes feelings of trepidation. When God opens the door we have the assurance of His accompaniment. He has not sent us into the future alone to face uncertainty and defeat. Rather, He has promised, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). He will not send you where He has not already been. There will be no surprises for Him and nothing that He has not already seen.

The *open door* invites us to step into the unknown, the future God has prepared for you. Future opportunity only requires a confident step of faith forward. There is no looking back, no second guesses. The *open door* compels us to embrace the call, dare to believe His plan, and take that forward step to fulfill our destiny.

Awaken to your Purpose. Arise from the lethargy of aimless passion. Recognize that God has a plan for your existence. You are not here by some cosmic accident or biological mischance. There is a providential blueprint for your design. The Almighty Architect has calculated every detail and prepared the spiritual schematic. Let His purpose be your path and surrender to His divine direction. Pursue the upward call. Boldly step through the *open door of destiny!*

Scripture:

“Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead” (Philippians 3:13).