

AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

by Tom Wacaster

Mystery writers produce plots that, more often than not, revolve around some heinous crime such as murder. Some of the more successful fictional sleuths include such notable characters as Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Mark Slone, Colombo, and Jessica Fletcher. Real live detectives (and even the fictional ones) enjoy cases that are “open and shut.” That means the evidence is so simple, so obvious and so abundant as to make the case exceptionally easy to solve. I enjoy watching Colombo for the simple reason that when the police first arrive on the scene the murder appears to be an “open and shut case.” Of course Colombo “doth not think so,” and hence, the unfolding of the story as the apparently inept Lieutenant goes about solving the mystery. We sometimes use the same terminology to express the simplicity of a problem. “It’s an open and shut case!” But I want to use these five words to help us focus on a passage in God’s word that has nothing at all to do with the work of a sleuth. Consider these words of our Lord as recorded in the book of Revelation: “To the church at Philadelphia write: These things saith he...that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth” (Rev. 3:7). We can only surmise what prompted these words to the Christians living in the city of “brotherly love” – saints who had faithfully kept the word; who did not deny the name of Christ. In the first century the church endured some of the most severe persecution in the history of Christianity. These Christians may have been tempted to capitulate on the basis that the battle was not going well for the church; that the door of opportunity was not there; that no one would listen. Perhaps the church had ceased to grow as it should, and rather than compromise the truth for the sake of “numbers,” these faithful disciples stayed the course. Jesus reminds them that it is He Who opens the doors of opportunity and it is He Who shuts those doors. This truth was demonstrated with ancient Israel when, upon failing to enter the Promised Land by faith, the door was closed and that disobedient generation could not reopen that door, try as they may. Whatever the situation in Philadelphia our Lord reminded them that He has the “key of David.” It is He who has the power to open doors; not Rome; not the synagogue of Satan; not the enemies of the church. When once our Lord opens a door, none can shut; and once He has shut the door, none can open. He opens the door of opportunity for His churches; He opens the heart through the teaching and preaching of the gospel; He opens a door of admission into His church, laying down the terms of entrance and fellowship. He also shuts the door, when He pleases. He shuts the door of opportunity and the door of utterance, and leaves obstinate sinners shut up in the hardness of their hearts; He shuts the door of fellowship against unbelievers and profane persons; He shuts the door of heaven against the foolish virgins who have slept away their day of grace; He shuts the door against the workers of iniquity, how vain and confident they may be.

There are dark clouds on the horizon! Where the bright light of freedom once shined, the dark clouds of error and sin are now blocking and blinding the eyes of men. Right is now called wrong; sin is glorified and honored. It seems as if the liberal leaders of our land are going about to get their wicked deeds “on the books” and written into law so as to suppress, intimidate, and incarcerate those who would dare speak out against the sins of homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, fornication, and marriage and divorce. The door into the hearts of men is being shut; the gospel rejected; God’s love requited. You and I may be tempted to think that the “unholy trinity” of Congress, the White House, and the

Judicial branch of government are closing the doors to our liberty; that the wicked leaders of our generation have successfully silenced the gospel. But when I read these words of Jesus to the saints in Philadelphia I am reminded that all the governments of the world *cannot* close the doors unless our God permits it! I know not what is in store for this nation, but I fear that our Lord is closing the doors in our country much as He did in Russia in the last century; as He has in Muslim countries around the world; as He has in China, and other places where men have determined in their own mind that we will not bow to the King of kings. We dare not capitulate in the face of adversity. Stay the course brethren; keep your faith in God. And should our God decide to take these freedoms from us, to bring upon *this* land a famine of the word, to allow our Bibles to be banned, and the truth evil spoken of, let us not forget that our God will accomplish His purpose and He will be glorified. Let come what may, never forget that it is, as our title suggests, “an open and shut case.”