

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon

The message today is from Revelation 3:7-13: The Church in Philadelphia

Main Principle: The Lord, who has all authority, loves to bless those who are faithful!

(intro)

I. History: Points of interest concerning the city and church in Philadelphia

A. The city

1. Founded and built by King Attalus "Philadelphus", who died in 138 B.C.
 - a) King Attalus II was nicknamed "Philadelphus" because he deeply loved his brother, King Eumenes, who preceded him as king of Pergamum.
2. It is thought that the city was established in 189 B.C.
3. Philadelphia was located almost 30 miles from Sardis
4. The city was almost destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A.D.
5. Modern history:
 - a) Philadelphia still exists in a little town called Allah-shear, "the city of God". Even today, according to Smith's *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, there are, among the 3000 households, 5 larger Christian churches and 20 smaller Christian churches!

B. The Church

1. We know that it would have been founded after the Day of Pentecost, which we read of in Acts 2.
 - a) What is not known is, was it founded by someone who became a believer on the Day of Pentecost, who returned to the area? Or,
 - b) Was it founded by Paul during his longer stay in Ephesus?
2. Not much is known about the church in Philadelphia, but there are two interesting stories:
 - a) Some Christians from Philadelphia were martyred with Polycarp and other Christians from Smyrna.
 - b) Later, another early church father, Ignatius, wrote a letter of encouragement to the saints in Philadelphia when passing through, while in chains in transport to Rome to die as a martyr.
3. And, most remarkably, the Church took to heart the command of the Lord Jesus to hold firmly to what they had, and remained known until the 14th century. Imagine that, 13 centuries!
 - a) They were overrun by Muslims
 - b) There are churches today, all over the world being overrun, or run out, or destroyed by a growing surge of Islamists.
 - (1) Although in places like South Sudan, Christian men, fathers and sons, have become determined to defend their lives, the lives and safety of their wives, children and extended church family,

including the elderly in the faith and their property including their church buildings and land.

(a) To date, the Christians in South Sudan have successfully stemmed the tide of the onslaught of militant Islamists.

C. Assignment: Try to identify a ministry that specifically ministers to the persecuted church and determine to adopt a particular project as a family to assist in the ministry to the persecuted.

II. (3:7-13) The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia

A. (3:7a) To: The angel/ messenger/ pastor/ elder of the church in Philadelphia

B. (3:7b,c) From: The Lord Jesus described as follows:

1. He who is holy

a) Another direct claim to His deity.

(1) This title of “the Holy One” refers to God, who alone possesses absolute holiness

(a) 2 Kings 19:22; Job 6:10; Psalms 71:22, 78:41

(2) It is also a messianic title ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ

(a) In Mark 1:24 a demon calls Him the Holy One: “I know who you are— the Holy One of God.”

(b) The angel speaking to Mary in Luke 1:35 says, “...So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.”

(c) Peter twice refers to the Lord Jesus as the Holy One:

(i) John 6:69, “We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

(ii) Acts 3:14, “You disowned the Holy and Righteous One...”

b) In Revelation 3:7 He who is Holy finds their deeds to be good in His sight. He has no critical words for them, indicating that they had a high view of His holiness.

2. He who is true

a) Understand His Genuine, authentic, undiluted Truth.

(1) It relates to His divine purity in His person and Word.

(a) John 14:6; Matthew 24:35

(2) And, to His divine purity in His righteous and holy judgments.

(a) See the following verses related to His judgments:

(i) Revelation 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2,11

3. He who has the key of David

a) “Key” is a term in Scripture indicating authority

- b) "...of David, then, points us to Christ as being the One who indeed sits on David's throne.
 - (1) David was promised in 2 Samuel 7, to have an heir (Christ) who sit on his throne ruling eternally from that throne over a forever ever kingdom as the forever King.
 - (a) Luke 1:32 says concerning the Christ, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David."
- c) Isaiah 22:20-23 provides us with interesting background concerning the key of David and the authority bestowed on the recipient. In Isaiah 22 it is laid on a faithful servant name Eliakim, who serves as a type of Christ.
- d) And, with this background, coupled with the promise concerning God's Messiah in Isaiah 9:6-7, we see that, "**the government will be upon His shoulder**" we can readily see that Jesus Christ, being both God and man, has absolute authority to act in accordance with His divine omnipotence!
- e) He holds the keys (authority) over death and Hades (Revelation 1:18) and the keys to salvation and blessing as we shall see in the next point.
- 4. He who opens so that no one can shut and who shuts that no one can open.
 - a) "He who opens so that no one can shut"
 - (1) The Lord Jesus lays claim to ultimate authority
 - (a) No one, no power, no decision of men can change the mind of the Lord Jesus!
 - (i) Isaiah 43:13, "No one can deliver out of My hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"
 - (b) What great assurance for you and me!! No one can shut the doors to His Kingdom, His gift of salvation, of mercy and grace, nor to His blessings!
 - (i) This great word of assurance should anchor us when in times of distress and trouble as it did for this small, seemingly powerless church!
 - b) "...and who shuts and no one can open."
 - (1) No one can push the doors open to force the Lord Jesus to act!
 - (a) This is a warning to all who would be relying on any other way to enter the kingdom of God. Now is the time for people to respond to the generous Gospel of God while the door is open.

(i) Once it is shut there is no entry. See:

(a) Matthew 25:10 and Luke 13:25

C. (3:8-11) His Commendation and Promises

1. Four Key points which marked the church in Philadelphia

a) They have “little power/ strength” but great deeds

(1) Small in number, but great in spiritual power

(a) They were active in working on behalf of Christ

preaching the Gospel, calling sinners to repentance and remaining faithful through their suffering for Christ.

b) They “kept [His] Word” without compromise

(1) They followed the pattern of obedience according to Scripture

because they loved Christ the Lord!

(a) John 14:23-24, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...Whoever doesn’t love Me doesn’t keep My words...”

(b) John 15:14, “You are My friends if you do what I command.”

c) They didn’t “deny [His] name.”

(1) From this we can infer that they were under great pressure, a “tribulation” similar to the church in Smyrna. (see Rev .2:9)

(2) See Revelation 3:9: pressure by the Jews who denied Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

d) (3:10) They kept His word about “enduring patiently” under pressure.

(1) This was and is commanded by the Lord!

(a) Matthew 10:22, “And you shall be hated by all men on account of Me, **but he that endures to the end will be saved.**”

(i) Endures patiently: Stands under the trial!

2. The Promises from the Lord Jesus for their encouragement (*keep doing that!*)

a) First, the Lord Himself says, “I have put before you an open door...”

(1) Their salvation is secure and guaranteed by the Lord

(2) And, He’s pleased to hold the door open for them to go out into the world for fruitful labor in ministering the Gospel!

(a) Open doors in NT speak of spreading the Gospel freely.

(i) See 1 Corinthians 16:8-9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col.4:2-3

b) Second, One day their enemies will bow in submission to them and some will be saved out of their dreadful sin of rejection and believe in Jesus!

(1) The synagogue of Satan was a sharp reference to people who claimed to be Jews but were liars. They denied Christ and His work.

(a) See Romans 2:28-29

(b) Because they rejected Christ they belonged to Satan.

(2) These persecutors will one day bow down in shame and disgrace because they both denied Christ and the message of the gospel; and they will acknowledge that these saints were loved by the Lord. **"...they will know that I have loved you."**

(3) Some will come to repentance and believe, becoming a reward for these believers! **"I will give you some of the synagogue of Satan."**

3. (3:10) The Lord Jesus promises to keep them from the hour of testing (Tribulation)

a) The question is, does this mean that this church will be keep "from" or "through" the hour of testing. Notice it is an "hour" of testing.

(1) Surely the church and churches following this church (even in our time) suffers many times of testing. But, there is an "hour of testing that is going to come upon the whole earth."

(a) Some great hour of testing, future to them, is coming upon the earth.

(i) It must be referring to the Great Tribulation, which was future to them and to us.

(ii) Saved from that particular hour must mean that the Church will be removed via the "rapture" before the Great Tribulation.

(a) Rapture verses: John 14:1-4; 1

Cor.15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17

b) "I am coming soon". His second coming will mark the deliverance of all believers alive and asleep and it precedes the "hour of testing".

(1) See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1

D. (3:11b) The Lord's Command: "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown." *Crown here may mean "victory".

1. This is a call to remain faithful and loyal to Christ

a) Be faithful to the Truth you have lived by so that the joy of your victory over the world, the flesh and the devil will not be tarnished.

- b) I don't think this "crown" is referring to salvation here, but rather the "winner's wreath," as some translation have worded it.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 9:23-27: Paul's determination to win the prize is illustrated well in this passage. And i think it serves us well in understanding what the Lord is saying to the church in 3:11b.
- c) Remain faithful and patient in endurance so that you will not lose your assurance of the gift of salvation, which was given to you by God.
 - (1) Unfaithfulness to the Lord robs you and me of assurance.

E. (3:12-13) The Comforting Counsel of the Lord: Three promises to the "Overcomer"

- 1. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of mM God.":
 - a) Promise of eternal security
- 2. "I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, ...":
 - a) The Lord pronounces **ownership** and **citizenship**.
- 3. "I will also write on him My new name."
 - a) This must mean that we will see Him in His fullness of glory. The new name will express the fullness of His glorious Person!

III. Application

- A. What can we get from this passage? This passage gives us hope and encouragement so that we will choose to be faithful to Jesus and patient though trials.
 - 1. The Lord loves to commend and bless His faithful servants.
 - a) Think of it. The One commending these believers is not like us. He's not like a weak man plodding through life cheering us on, like a good friend would.
 - b) No! He's the Holy One (The Divine Son of God), The Genuine One (perfect in His purity and holiness and divine perfections); the very One who has the key of David (is The Sovereign Lord of all, with all authority);
 - (1) You have little strength, but He is limitless!
 - (2) Do you know that the Bible is full of stories of God choosing those who are the least and the smallest?
 - (a) Moses (meek); David (the least)
 - c) This One is pleased to put before these believers an open door for service, and He holds it open!
 - (1) Thought this church was small the Lord is thrilled to open the door for them and hold it open!

- (a) Do you get that? He will reward the faithful with fruitfulness!
- (b) And do you know that the faithful look for open doors to serve Him?
 - (i) Listen to the Apostle Paul:
 - (a) 1 Cor. 16:8-9: "So I'll stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, since a wide door for effective work has opened for me, and there are many who oppose."
 - (b) 2 Cor. 2:12: "When I came to Troas to preach the good news about Christ, a door was opened for me **by the Lord**."
 - (c) Colossians 4:2-3: "Persevere in prayer, being alert in it with thanksgiving, praying at the same time also about us, that God may **open for us a door** for the Word, to speak about the secret of Christ..."
 - (ii) Do you pray for open doors? Do you yearn for fruitfulness like this?
 - (iii) So often, we get caught up in our projects and with our efforts to open doors, that we stop seeking the Lord to open doors to labor that He finds fruitful!
- 2. I want you to see this: He remembers every time you chose to obey His commands even when it caused you to suffer? Revelation 3:10: He commends them for this very thing. They obeyed His command to patiently endure the mocking and blaspheming of Christ by those so-called members of the synagogue of Satan!
 - a) He gives us promises of His presence with us when we obey (think of Matthew 28:18-20).
- 3. Friends, His rewards far outweigh our failings. His grace exceeds our weaknesses. His patience and long sufferings out run our patience.
- 4. If there is any encouragement for Christians in the world today, this letter to the church in Philadelphia is it.

- a) Don't become weary in doing good. Run the race. Win the crown and hold on to it. We see pastors and churches chucking the true doctrines of Scripture and bringing disgrace on the name of Christ.
- b) But, let's you and me make up our minds to obey the commands of our Lord Jesus. Let's live to please Him. He loves to bless faithfulness!