

“Philadelphia: The Church of the Faithful Witness”

Revelation 3:7-13

Last Sunday: The Study of Sardis, the Church of the Dying

Today: The Study of Philadelphia, the Church of the Faithful Witness

Five Parts to Each of These Seven Letters:

- Description: Christ’s self-description; to understand the commendation/rebuke (3:7-8a)
- Commendation: What the church is doing right (3:8b)
- Rebuke: What the church is doing wrong (Like Smyrna, none!)
- Exhortation: Urging the church to take action (3:11)
- Promise: If you overcome, you will receive this reward. (3:9-10, 12-13)

Philadelphia, the City:

- 30 miles southeast of Sardis
- Named *Philadelphos* by Pergamum King Eumenes II for his brother Attalus
- Small population due to a fear of earthquakes (city was rebuilt in AD 17)
- The volcanic soil made for delicious grapes and Dionysus worship (god of wine).

Philadelphia, the Church:

- Similar to Smyrna: both suffer from the Jews and persecutions and are promised a crown.
- Faithful witness? Christ has the key of David and has set before them an open door.
- ***Historicist:*** Church of the modern missionary movement (1793-1900 or ??), Father of Modern Missions William Carey (India), George Liele (Jamaica), Adoniram and Ann Judson (Myanmar), Hudson Taylor (China), Amy Carmichael (India), etc.

3:8/ “Behold, I have set before you an open door.”

Biblically speaking, what does an “open door” mean?

1. The key to the Kingdom - having the key in a unique way in leading others to Christ
 - a. Acts 14:27, “God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”
2. The key to gospel opportunities - In particular, this church has an amazing key (opportunity) to proclaim the gospel (good news of Jesus Christ) with others.
 - a. Col. 4:3, “Pray for us that God may open to us a door for the Word to declare the mystery of Christ.”

3:8/ “Which no one is able to shut”

Beware of excuses in failing to proclaim the gospel. The Top Three:

1. “I will mess up.”
2. “They are not interested and won’t listen.”
3. “I am waiting on the Lord for just the right opportunity.”

3:10/ “I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.”

What “hour of trial” is Christ referring to?

1. An empire-wide tribulation in the first or second century. The whole world? οἰκουμένη (oikoumené): The inhabited world. In Greek writings, the term often refers to the portion of the earth inhabited by the Greeks.
2. The future world-wide tribulation. Mt. 24:21, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.”

3:10/ “I will keep you from...”

Jn. 17:15, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you *keep* them *from* the evil one.”

- In Jn. 17:15, “keeping from” does not mean removing believers from the planet, since Christ just made it clear that his desire is not to take his apostles out of this world.
- Christ is speaking of spiritual protection, not physical protection.

Whatever Happened to Philadelphia, the Church of the Faithful Witness?

Christ has all authority and the key of David, so here are three actions to take in being a faithful witness:

1. Pray. Lk. 10:2, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray that the Lord...”
2. Go. Mt. 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”
3. Look. Jn. 4:35, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”