

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

7. The Church in Philadelphia



Introduction

Let's look at the sixth letter given by Jesus in the book of Revelation – the letter to the church of Philadelphia.

Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:7-13

Philadelphia was 28 miles south-east of Sardis and was a strategic city in the world at that time. It was the gateway to Asia Minor, and had been built to spread Greek culture to the 3 countries bordering it. Unfortunately it was situated in an earthquake prone area, and constantly experienced earth tremors, so its' inhabitants lived in fear and uncertainty.



This is the only church that received no condemnation. What did Jesus commend this church for? V8, 10

(They had kept Jesus' word or commandments and had not denied His name. Also they had patiently endured.)

Several other churches had received similar commendations by Jesus, but no other church had been praised for keeping His commands as the church of Philadelphia was. Jesus stressed the importance of obeying Him – it is an indication of real love. In fact the name 'Philadelphia' means 'brotherly love'. Perhaps this church was marked by love for God and love for one another.



What are the commands of Jesus given in the Gospels? Spend some time thinking about these. Look up the following verses: Mathew 6:14, 25; 7:1, 7; 10:8; 16:24; 18:4-5; 22:37-39; 28:18-20



Which of these commands are you finding the most difficult to obey? What changes do you need to make in your life right now so you will begin to obey in this area?

When Jesus began His letter to the church in Philadelphia He says: "These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut... I have placed before you an open door." Read Isaiah 22:20-24



What light do these verses in Isaiah shed on the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:7-13?

(Just as Eliakim had the authority (the keys) to allow people to enter the royal palace in Jerusalem, so Jesus has been given authority to allow those He chooses into the New Jerusalem.)

Jesus is the one who opens the door into the Kingdom of Heaven. We can only enter through Him – He is 'the door'. The reference here to the 'open door' could possibly be speaking about the rapture. The phrase is also used in conjunction with spreading the Gospel, and since this is one of Jesus' commands, we will focus on this meaning.



Look up these verses: Matthew 7:7, Acts 14:27, 1 Corinthians 16:8-9, Colossians 4:3-5
What can we learn from these scriptures that will make us more effective in obeying the Great Commission?



There is just one word of caution given to this church in Revelation 3:11. The word 'hold fast' means 'to be strong', 'to prevail'. Why is this so important?

(As we have studied the different letters we have seen the danger that we can easily fall into and miss all God has promised for us. We need to be careful, and strong in the Lord, so we do not let go of what we have.)



What are the wonderful promises that Jesus gives to this church? V10, 12

They will be kept from the hour of trial coming upon the world.

(Some believe this refers to the tribulation.)

2. They will be pillars in the temple of God. cf. Galatians 2:9.

3. They will receive a new name and gain entrance into the New Jerusalem.)

Conclusion

If you study the background of the city of Philadelphia you will realize how apt Jesus' statements were. For example the people in this city had fled many times because of the frequent earth tremors. Jesus promised them entrance into the New Jerusalem where they would never have to leave again. However this letter also seems to describe the events that are about to take place in the near future. We too are living in a time when the earth is shaking, and we are looking forward to the coming of Jesus. Let's take careful note how we can be over-comers – we need to continually obey the commands of Jesus. Let's hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us today.