

"The Letters to the 7 Churches"

Part 6

Revelation 2:1-3:22

Introduction: Before we get into our study of the 7 churches today I need to let you know that when we get through the letters to the 7 churches we are then going to go back and look closely at the Words given to the OVERCOMERS which we have been skipping over in these letters.

Now today in our study we have come to the 6th letter addressed to the churches.

"The Church at Philadelphia"

Background: I want to begin by giving you some back ground on the city of Philadelphia because this back ground will really bring to light what our Lord says concerning this church.

The city of Philadelphia was full of idol worship. Let me read the words of Barclay concerning the city:

"Philadelphia had so many gods and so many temples that sometimes men called it "Little Athens." To walk through its temple-scattered streets was to be reminded of Athens, the center of worship of the Olympian gods." (Barclay)

Now let me show you what is recorded in Acts concerning Athens.

Acts 17:16

¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

The city of Philadelphia was referred to as "LITTLE ATHENS" and here we can see what Athens was like. It was a city given over to idolatry. So we can assume that Philadelphia was very much the same way.

With that said let me just tell you that this letter to the church at Philadelphia contains absolutely NO CONDEMNATION. They were surrounded by idolatry but they were not involved in the pagan practices.

Now this was considered to be a missionary city. Let me read the words of Barclay concerning the city as a missionary city:

"Philadelphia had been built with the deliberate intention that it might become a missionary city. Beyond Philadelphia lay the wilds of Phrygia and the barbarous tribes; and it was intended that the function of Philadelphia should be to spread the Greek language, the Greek way of life, the Greek civilization, throughout the regions beyond." (Barclay)

This made the city of Philadelphia a place where many travelers would pass through. Barclay also states:

"Philadelphia was a prosperous city. Philadelphia commanded one of the greatest highways in the world, the highway which led from Europe to the East. Philadelphia was the gateway from one continent to another." (Barclay)

It was in the middle of this city that the church was located. The opportunities to reach the lost were endless for this church and at the same time exposure to the world was at the highest level.

I. The Greeting

Notice Revelation 3:7

Jesus identifies Himself in 4 ways in this greeting. Neither of the ways of identification is taken from the vision in chapter 1 but instead they are taken from the Old Testament. Many believe the reason for this was because of the Jewish influence within this church. Let us look closely at the ways in which our Lord presents Himself to this church.

1. He that is Holy.

The word "HOLY" means "to be set apart". Jesus is Holy because he is set apart from sin. He is sinless and He is perfect in Holiness.

Leviticus 19:2

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

² Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

Isaiah 6:1-3

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

² *Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.*

³ *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Revelation 15:4

⁴ *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*

These are but a few verses and there are many more which speak of the Holiness of our Lord. Let's look at the next point then we will pull these together.

2. He that is True.

This reminds me of what Jesus said in John 14.

John 14:6

⁶ *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Jesus is the TRUE God and the Words He speaks are the ABSOLUTE TRUTH. There is not one Word which is spoken by Him that is not the TRUTH. His Word is the TRUTH and what He speaks will come to pass.

Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁰ *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:*

¹¹ *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Now with this said let us consider that Jesus is standing before this church with eyes that see all things. He knows everything there is to know about this church and HE HAS NOT ONE NEGATIVE THING TO SAY ABOUT THIS CHURCH. This is amazing!! Here is a church that is in the middle of a sin filled city which is being infiltrated by people from the surrounding world who are bringing with them their sinful practices and yet Jesus CANNOT find one negative thing to say about this church.

This church was not perfect but it was a church that was walking in the will and the Word of God. Compared to the other churches this church:

- a. They held to their first love.
- b. They refused to tolerate sin within the church.
- c. They refused to tolerate false teachers.
- d. They were alive and bearing fruit for the Lord.

Application:

This is a reminder to each of us who know Christ that no matter the circumstances it is very possible to live in a way that honors our Lord in the midst of the darkness of this world.

In this church at Philadelphia there was pressure which we will see. There was likely persecution because they were walking in the will of God.

2 Timothy 3:12

¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Let us now look at the next way in which Jesus identifies Himself.

3. **He that hath the keys of David.**

This statement is taken from the Old Testament in Isaiah 22.

Isaiah 22:20-22

²⁰ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah:

²¹ And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

²² And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

In this text Eliakim would replace Shebna who was unfaithful and Eliakim would be given the keys to the house of David. But the questions are, "What do the keys unlock and what is in the house of David?"

There is another verse that will give us the insight which we need here.

Isaiah 22:15

¹⁵ *Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house...*

Here we see that Shebna was the TREASURER. Therefore he was given authority over the wealth in the treasure house. This then helps us to understand that the HOUSE OF DAVID is the TREASURE HOUSE of the Lord.

So as Jesus identifies Himself as He who holds the keys to the house of David He is stating to the church at Philadelphia and to all of His children that He is the One who holds and distributes the spiritual blessings and riches upon the church. The keys speak of Authority. Jesus has the Authority over the wealth of God's store house.

Let me now raise a question, "What is the treasure in the store house which Jesus holds the keys to?"

I believe this covers a wide variety of blessings. It would include the spiritual blessings which are given to the church. It would also include the physical blessings given to the church. The church being the body of Christ and its members.

John 3:27

²⁷ *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*

James 1:17

¹⁷ *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

✓ **Spiritual Blessings**

1. Strength for trials.
2. Wisdom for decisions.
3. Grace when suffering.
4. Peace in the storms.

5. Rest when weary.
6. Courage when threatened.
7. Patience when tried.
8. Compassion for those who struggle and those who are lost.

These are just a few of the SPIRITUAL blessings which are given to church from the store house.

✓ **Physical Blessings**

1. Opportunities for service - open doors.
2. The things which are needed to carry out the service.

Now let us look at the next way in which our Lord identifies Himself.

4. **He that opens and no one shuts and He that shuts and no one opens.**

This shows His sovereign control. If He opens a door to blessing it can be closed by no one. If He closes a door then there is no one who can open it.

There are several points to be seen in this statement:

1. **Closed doors are for our own good.**

When Jesus closes a door in our lives then we must be willing to accept the Truth that He knows what is best for His church and He has closed the door for our good. We must never try to force our way through a closed door.

God closed the door on David when he desired to build a temple. God closed the door on Paul in Acts 16 when he tried to go to Bithynia. Many of God's people have faced closed doors and when it happens it is very important to accept it as a blessing from God.

2. **Open doors may be open only for a short period of time.**

We must understand that when God opens a door it may only be open for a short time. That means when the door opens we must be willing to step through in faith. To hesitate or to delay in any way may mean a missed opportunity.

3. When a door is opened there will always be the spiritual and the physical blessings given that are needed to step through the door.

This lesson is very important for us to hold onto. When God opens a door there is sometimes the concern of what is going to happen further down the path. People wonder how things will work out a month or a year on down the path after they step through the open door. But what we need to understand is that when we step out in faith through the open door God is obligated to meet our needs.

Matthew 6:31-34

³¹ *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

³² *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

³³ *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

³⁴ *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

Conclusion:

I want to end this message today by speaking to anyone who has not accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Today God has opened the door of opportunity for you to come to Jesus Christ. But if you hesitate and you delay you may face a closed door and all of your chances to be saved will be gone. Once Jesus closes the door no one can open it.

2 Corinthians 6:2

² *(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*