

Daniel & Revelation End-time Prophecies Sermon Series
Study #31: Little But Strong - Philadelphia
Revelation 3:7 – 13
Bible Sermon Study Notes by Cary Rodgers, pastor

Quick review:

In the message to each church we studied thus far we examined the 1-literal historical application 2-the prophetic application and 3-modern church application.

So far we studied four of the seven church: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis

Church	Main Message	Prophetic Time Period	Description
Ephesus	Return to your first love	31 to 100 AD	Pure Church
Smyrna	You are humble yet rich. Must go through tribulation. Pressure will reveal character.	100 to 323	Persecuted Church
Pergamos	Get rid of the doctrine Balaam and the Nicolaitans	323 to 538	Compromising Church
Thyatira	Get rid of the doctrine of Jezebel which try to make the pagan things of Satan into the holy things of God.*	538 to 1798	Corrupt Church – Formation & Empire of Papacy
Sardis	Jesus' message was designed to expose their true dead condition and wake them up!	1798 to 1844	Great Awakening & Advent Movement

Letter to seven churches: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion

Today we are going to examine the message that was given to the church of Philadelphia found in **Revelation 3:8-12**. We will see how the message to the church of Philadelphia applies to that specific church, how it represents a significant historical period of the Christian church, and how it applies to us today.

Thayer Definition:

Philadelphia (Greek) = Philadelpheia = “brotherly love”
 or "the city of him who loves his brother"

Literal-Historic City of Philadelphia

The city of Philadelphia is only 25 miles south-east of Sardis in Asia Minor – now a part of **Alaşehir, Turkey**. Philadelphia is believed to be founded by and named after Attalus Philadelphus. Also some believe that the city of Philadelphia was named to reflect the love and loyalty between the founder Philadelphus and his brother, the king of Lydia. **“In AD 17, the city suffered badly in an earthquake, and the Roman emperor Tiberius relieved it of having to pay taxes.”** - Wikipedia. The near by Sardis also suffered great damage from this earthquake. **City of Philadelphia was also steep in pagan and idol worship like many other cities within the Roman Empire at the time the church of Philadelphia received its letter and the Revelation message.** The city of Philadelphia was known to be the worship center of the false god, Dionysus. **“Dionysus** is the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness, fertility, theatre and religious ecstasy in ancient Greek religion and

myth. Wine played an important role in Greek culture, and the cult of Dionysus was the main religious focus for its unrestrained consumption.” - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus

Introduction

How does Jesus introduce Himself to the church of Philadelphia?

Revelation 3:7

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is **holy**, he that is **true**, he that hath the **key of David**, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

In contrast to the false worship and god that was in the city of Philadelphia, Jesus reminds the church in Philadelphia that He is Holy and TRUE. All the pagan god throughout the city are corrupted and false.

Jesus says that He has the “key of David” and only Jesus Christ has the key of David that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. What does this mean?

Jesus in Revelation 3:7 is referring to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy of Himself in Isaiah 22:22 and Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Isaiah 22:22

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.

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy!

Luke 1:31-33

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Jesus is the has the key of our salvation in His hands.

Acts 4:12

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

No other man hold the keys of our salvation. No church conference or pastors hold the keys of our salvation. Only Jesus! He is holy and true. Jesus the one who holds the keys reveal who is in charge! Once Jesus make His judgments of individuals as just or unjust, it is sealed and no man can change it.

Body of the messages

What was the message that was given to the church of Philadelphia?

The body of the message that Jesus sent to the church of Philadelphia can be broken into three sections.

First section

Revelation 3:8

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

In the first section of the body of the message Jesus reminds Philadelphia of the door in which He alone has the authority and the keys to open and close. Jesus recognizes the works of the church of Philadelphia. Jesus reveals in the last part of verse 8 that these works were genuine works motivated by the love of Jesus Christ working within them because He praises them for keeping His Word and accepting Him as Lord and Saviour. Jesus also said in verse 8 that Philadelphia had “little strength”. Now, this “little strength” is not reflective of a weak spiritual condition, but it reflects the meek and humble Christian attitude of Philadelphia.

The church of Philadelphia realized if they connected their humility and faith in Jesus their “little strength” became much!

2 Corinthians 13:4

4 For though he [Jesus] was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Philippians 4:13

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

When we surrender to God He promised to give you the power to live by His Word because it is Him that is doing the work in you.

So it is evident so far in the message to church of Philadelphia that they understood the power of God even in their weakness or humility in Christ. The church of Philadelphia were little / weak but strong Christians.

2 Corinthians 12:10

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Now let's take a look at the second section of the body of the message that Jesus gave to the church of Philadelphia.

Second section

Revelation 3:9

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Do you know that the first part of this text is almost identical to part of the message that Jesus gave to the church of Smyrna in Revelation 2:9. Remember from our thorough study of the church of Smyrna, “the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews” refers to those who call themselves Christians, but are

hiding in their hearts the corruptions of the world and Satan. So even in a loving church like Philadelphia, God warned Philadelphia that there were Christian fakes planted within the church by Satan to try to disrupt the unity and harmony of the church.

Why does Jesus call fake Christians a lie in Revelation 3:9?

1 John 2:3-5

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, **is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

Liar (Greek): pseustēs [psyoos-tace'] = **a falsifier.**

Who is the father of ALL LIARS?

John 8:44

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

The Synagogue of Satan

“Christ speaks of the church over which Satan presides as the synagogue of Satan. Its members are the children of disobedience. They are those who choose to sin, who labor to make void the holy law of God. It is Satan's work to mingle evil with good, and to remove the distinction between good and evil. Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good, whose members will not willingly tolerate wrong-doing, but will expel it from the heart and life.” (Ellen White, *The Church of God*, Review & Herald Dec. 4, 1900).

What does Jesus mean when He says in Revelation 3:9 “I will make them [those who are of the synagogue of Satan] to come and worship before thy [truth remnant] feet, and to know that I have loved thee”?

Isaiah 60:14

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Those in the last days who profess remnant status are going to be the greatest persecutors. God's true remnant at the end of time must go through a time of great persecution. In the end the persecutors will recognize that God was with His faithful through it all. They are not bowing down in worship to those they persecuted as gods, but in recognition of the power of God that works in them.

Now let's take a look at the third section of the body of the message that Jesus gave to the church of Philadelphia.

Third section

Revelation 3:10-11

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

After the reading of this text like the church of Smyrna you can see that Jesus did not give Philadelphia any rebuke or reproofs, only encouragement. Christ acknowledges the patience of Philadelphia and encourages them to continue to hold on to the truths of God despite the heart aches and struggles of living in a sin sick world.

Notice in verse 10 Jesus acknowledges that there will be an hour of temptation [or trials] that will come upon the whole world. An hour of trials denotes a specific period of time. The study of the 7 last plagues in Revelation 16 makes an apparent application to this specific period of time. This will be a time of trouble since there were people on this planet.

In verse 11 He promises that He will return quickly. He encourages them and us to stay focused and not allow anyone to discourage them from receiving their reward of the crown of life.

Jesus repeats this promise of coming quickly in the last chapter of Revelation!

Revelation 22:7, 12, and 20

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

This is the promise friend, HOLD on until the end. Jesus will fulfill His promise. This is NOT to let go of your hold on His promises, this is the time to HOLD on tighter. It's about to be some very rough seas ahead. Don't forget His promises!

John 16:33 (Jesus says)

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

God tells us like He told Philadelphia; hold on saints, Jesus is coming soon to take you to live with Him forever. Hold on my brother, hold on my sister, Jesus knows and understands your circumstances and one day it will all be over, because God said it will. What hope!

Conclusion

What was the conclusion of Jesus message to the church of Philadelphia?

Revelation 3:12-13

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Appeal

Next sermon we will examine the message that was given to the church of Laodicea.