

THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

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WEEK EIGHT

I. THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (Revelation 2:1 - 3:22)

A. The Repeating Pattern Of The Messages

1. A description of the character of Christ.
2. A description of what Christ knows about each church, with a word of commendation for their strengths and a word of rebuke for their sins of commission and omission.
3. A call to repentance, with a warning of consequences if they don't repent.
4. A description of the reward promised for faithfulness and overcoming.

B. The Message To The Church In Philadelphia (3:7-13)

1. The historical context of Philadelphia:
 - a. A relatively young city: created in 140 BC as a base from which to spread Greek language and culture.
 - b. Built along the main highway and trade route; also built directly on a fault line and volcanic zone.
 - c. It experienced constant earthquakes, tremors, and aftershocks. People were constantly fleeing and returning to the city.
 - d. It had so many temples in it, some referred to it as "little Athens".
 - e. After one major earthquake, the damage was so severe that Rome didn't collect taxes for 5 years so they could rebuild. In appreciation, the city changed their name to Neocaesara ("New City of Caesar".)

2. The specific message to the church in Philadelphia:

- a. Beginning with a description of the character of Christ:

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open." (v. 7)

- i. Christ is given titles reserved for Yahweh (See Isaiah 40:25; Habakkuk 3:3; Revelation 6:10).
- ii. John refers to Isaiah 22:22 regarding the one in charge of the keys to the royal palace. Christ is seen as the One exercising the ultimate authority.

- b. Then followed by a description of what Christ knows about the church:

- i. First, a word of commendation...

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (v. 8)

- 1.) ***"An open door"***: could refer to the door of salvation or a door of opportunity. Both are used in Scripture (Matthew 7:13-14; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12)
- 2.) ***"You have little strength, yet have kept my word... not denied my name..."***: They were small in number and influence, yet strong and steadfast in their faith.

ii. This is one of two instances (Smyrna) that Christ offers no word of rebuke...

iii. Where there is no word of rebuke, there is no need for a call to repentance...

iv. Christ then moves directly to the reward for faithfulness...

"I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (vv. 9-13)

- 1.) ***"The synagogue of Satan"***: Likely a reference to individuals in Philadelphia who were zealously persecuting the Christ-followers in the name of Judaism.
- 2.) ***"I will also keep you from the hour of trial..."***: Scholars are uncertain if this refers to an event in our past (but their future), or if it refers to a great trial still to come in the last days.
- 3.) ***"I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it..."***: Remember the context of this quake-ravaged city, filled with temples... They will be permanent, living pillars in God's eternal, living temple!
- 4.) ***"The new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven..."***: Not "The New City of Caesar" but "The New Jerusalem"; not rooted in a trembling earth but ***"coming down out of heaven"***...
- 5.) ***"I will also write on them my new name..."***: Like their city of Philadelphia, they themselves will be given a new name! This is the ultimate sign of ownership, and a foreshadowing of what is yet to come in Revelation 19:11-21.