

Pentwater Bible Church

Revelation Message 9

October 22, 2023



The Descent of the Holy Spirit by Anthony Van Dyke, Cir. 1618-1620

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THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA PART I

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PHILADELPHIA: THE CHURCH OF THE GREAT MISSIONARY MOVEMENT (A.D. 1648-1900)

Revelation 3:7–13

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; 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. 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. 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. 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 (KJV).

The destination (v.7a) is the church in the city of Philadelphia, which means “brotherly love.” In the historical-prophetic interpretation, it is a fitting symbol of the church during the great missionary movement from 1700 through 1900. It was the period of great missionary names like Hudson Taylor, Adoraim Judson, William Cary, Stanley Livingstone, Amy Carmichael and many others.

The description of Jesus in verse 7b is taken from Revelation 1:18, picturing Him as the One with authority to open and close doors and in possession of the Key of David.

This is the second church for which there is no condemnation. Like Smyrna, Jesus finds nothing against this church and is satisfied with it.

The commendation is found in verse eight. They are commended for making use of the open door. It is Jesus Himself, who opened the door, and the Philadelphians were faithful in making use of the open door. During the period of 1700-1900 there was virtually no place where a missionary could not go. Every place was open to them. Today, increasingly more countries are closing their doors to missionaries. But, during those two centuries there was virtually no limitations, and this church took advantage of it. They had little power; it was a minority supporting those missionaries. Yet, the little power was used to accomplish great things. They are commended for it.

The promise found in verses 9-10 and 12-13 is fourfold. First, in verse nine, they are promised fruit from those who claim to be Jews or the people of God and are not. It is still the period described by Hosea (1:8-9; 2:23) when Israel is on the sideline of God's program and considered to be not my people. But in the future, they will again become my people (Hosea 1:10-2:1; 3:5). It is interesting to note that it is during this time that Jewish missions were strongly developed. Near the end of this time the Jews (Zionists) were coming back to the Land Israel (Eretz Yisrael). It was also at this time that the Lord Jesus declared the beginning of the end times was starting (Nation rising against nation). By 1900 some 250,000 Jews became believers. Jewish missions first began in Germany, took root in England, and finally came to fruition in the United States. It was a time when the natural branches were regrafted into their own Olive Tree. However, it is more likely that this verse deals more literally with those who claim to be Jews, but they are not. This is also the period that saw the rise of the cults, such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, and Seventh Day Adventists.

LOCATION & JESUS NATURE

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 (KJV).

Philadelphia was 28 miles southeast of Sardis. It was principally noted for its agricultural products but suffered earthquakes that destroyed the city several times, the latest recorded to the writing of this letter was about A.D. 37. The city was named for a king of Pergamum, Attalus Philadelphus, who had built it. Philadelphus is similar to the Greek word *philadelphia*, meaning "brotherly love," which occurs many times in the Bible (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; I Peter 1:22; II Peter 1:7; Revelation 3:7). Only here is it used of the city itself. Christian testimony continues in the city in this present century.

Christ described Himself as the One who is holy and true, who holds the key of David, and who is able to open or shut a door which no one else could open or shut. The holiness of Christ is a frequent truth in Scripture (I Peter 1:15), and being holy He is worthy to judge the spiritual life of the Philadelphia church. He *that hath the key of David*; mention is made of David, because he is a type of Christ; and because from him Christ came according to the flesh, and whose throne He will to sit upon, in the Messianic kingdom.

Seventeen verses in the New Testament describe Jesus as the "son of David." Christ (the Messiah) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the seed of David (II Samuel 7:12-16). Jesus is the promised Messiah, which means He had to be of the lineage of David. Matthew 1 gives the genealogical evidence that Jesus, in His humanity, was a direct descendant of Abraham and David through Joseph, Jesus' legal father. The genealogy in Luke 3 traces Jesus' lineage through His mother, Mary. Jesus is a descendant of David by adoption through Joseph and by blood through Mary. "*As to his earthly life [Christ Jesus] was a descendant of David*" (Romans 1:3). Son of David is a Messianic title which means He is the long-awaited Deliverer, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus was addressed as "*Lord, thou son of David*" several times by people who, by faith, were seeking mercy or healing. The woman whose daughter was being tormented by a demon

(Matthew 15:22) and the two blind men by the wayside (Matthew 20:30) all cried out to the Son of David for help. The titles of honor they gave Him declared their faith in Him. Calling Him “Lord” expressed their sense of His deity, dominion, and power, and calling Him “Son of David,” expressed their faith that He was the Messiah. In order to fully embrace how Jesus is describing Himself it is important to look to the question He posed in Mark 12:35.

THE MESSIAHSHIP

The purpose of verses 35-37 in the twelfth chapter of Mark is to establish the true nature of the Messiah of Israel.

Mark 12:35

³⁵ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How, say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? (KJV)

Messiah is *more* than the physical son of David. If He is David’s Lord, He must be greater than David. As Jesus says in Revelation 22:16, “*I am the Root and the Offspring of David.*” That is, He is both the Creator of David and the Descendant of David. Only the Son of God made flesh could say that.

During the last week of His life during His first advent, Jesus continued teaching in the Court of the Gentiles on the Temple Mount. Keeping in mind their legalistic and highly detailed understanding of the Scriptures, Jesus raises the question of Messiahship as defined by the Scribes to the group of listeners. Jesus was making reference to the opening verses of Psalm 110 in this question, “*How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?*” Psalm 110 was commonly known to describe the Messiah and this Psalm opens with the lineage of the Messiah. Whose son, is He? The Scribes, who were in the audience, would say that the Messiah (Christ) is the Son of David. This concept was firmly understood in many Old Testament Scriptures (II Samuel 7:8–16; Psalm 89:3–4; Isaiah 9:2–7; 11:1–9; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:15–17, 22; Ezekiel 34:23–24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11).

The Pharisees expected a totally human Messiah to deliver them from the Gentile dominion that had plagued them since the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. Going along with their general misunderstanding of the Scriptures, they missed the full and correct interpretation of the Messiah too. They wanted a warrior-type who could deliver them from foreign rule and establish the earthly Messianic Kingdom. They were persuaded that their interpretation of the Messiah would restore Israel’s greatness to that of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon. The truth is the Messiah would be a man, to be sure, but He would also come as God in the flesh. By the Middle Ages the Jewish rabbinic authorities decided that another identifier of the Messiah was to be added to the Jewish teachings, and they taught that there would be two Messiahs. They decided that the Messiah would be a “Son of David” and a “Son of Joseph”. One would come from the lineage of David and another would come from the lineage of Jacob’s son, Joseph. The Messiah from Joseph is an important concept within the Jewish rabbinical teaching. The Rabbis came to this concept from the Old Testament prophet of Obadiah:

Obadiah 1:18

¹⁸And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it. (ASV, 1901)

In this scenario the Messiah of Joseph will be killed in the war against evil that they say was prophesied by the prophet Zechariah. This is a misuse of the Zechariah prophecy to further an erroneous concept of a “second Messiah”. The Zechariah passage actually refers to the end of the Great Tribulation where the Jewish leaders finally realize who Jesus is and mourn what they did to Him when He appeared the first time. The Zechariah passage actually is about the national regeneration of the Nation Israel:

Zechariah 12:10

¹⁰And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. (ASV, 1901)

Zechariah describes how the Lord pours out His “*spirit of grace and of supplication*” and causes the Jews to realize that it was *them* who persecuted Jesus and had Him nailed to the cross at Calvary. The Lord in the first person (“*me*”) begins to describe the mourning process the Jews will go through when they finally realize that it was God himself who died for them as Jesus the Messiah. He uses the analogy of losing a child to express the degree of mourning that will be felt. This degree of mourning is unparalleled in the lives of humans because the loss of a child is one of the greatest pains one can experience. God says not only is it the loss of a child, but it is the loss of a parent’s only male child. Then He further emphasizes the situation of losing a son who is also their first-born child. Our first-born children are the ones with whom we learn parenting and spend the most time and effort attending to their care. We usually invest more of ourselves into the first-born child than any other child. A loss of this child will give us an immense amount of pain that will never leave us while we are still on this earth. This is the extent of pain the Nation Israel will experience when they finally realize what they have done to their Messiah Jesus.

JESUS CLARIFIES THE TRUE NATURE OF THE MESSIAH

Mark 12:36

³⁶ For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. (KJV)

Here in this verse Jesus makes it quite clear through His discourse with the Scribes that there is only one Messiah, and He is fully man and fully God at the same time. It is helpful to see what Jesus was quoting to affirm His Messiahship:

Psalms 110:1-7

A Psalm of David

¹*Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. ²Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Out of the womb of the morning Thou hast the dew of thy youth. ⁴Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest forever After the order of Melchizedek. ⁵The Lord at thy right hand Will strike through kings in the day of his wrath. ⁶He will judge among the nations, He will fill the places with dead bodies; He will strike through the head in many countries. ⁷He will drink of the brook in the way: Therefore will he lift up the head. (ASV, 1901)*

David wrote this Psalm that was inspired by the Holy Spirit and refers to the Messiah to come. (This same Psalm is also is quoted in Acts 2:34-35 and Hebrews 1:13.) The words of this Psalm are addressed to David's "*Lord*". He had received a revelation from God, which was given to codify with certainly the origin and specific nature of the Messiah. Jesus was making the point in the Court of the Gentiles that He was not only a physical descendent of David but He was David's "*Lord*" or God Himself. The physical human genealogy of Jesus was given in both Matthew's and Luke's Gospels. Matthew starts his Gospel in verse one affirming Jesus's physical descent from David by saying, "*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*" (Matthew 1:1). So, Jesus says that He is David's Lord, not just his descendent.

Another key aspect of Psalm 110 is that the Messiah will occupy the offices of both Priest and King, like Melchizedek ("*Thou art a priest forever After the order of Melchizedek*"). God promised to rise up out of the House of David, a special King and Priest who would combine the two great roles of Priest and King in His own Person. This is also described in the New Testament book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 2:8-9

⁸*Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (KJV)*

At the same time, He would be the last and greatest Prophet, through whom God would reveal Himself more fully and perfectly to man. God predicted in Psalm 110:5 a theocratic King, who "*shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath,*" and "*judge among nations.*" The apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:8-9a, that Christ Jesus "*being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross*". *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him*" (KJV). This duality follows the order of Melchizedek who was the only other person in the bible declared to be both a king and a priest. "*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he [was] the priest of the most high God*" (Genesis 14:18). The union of the offices of Priest and King are merged in the person of the Messiah, so that He, being first our High Priest, is also our King. In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews 5:6 declares

that Jesus is a type of Melchizedek, “As he saith also in another [place], Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (KJV). Zechariah also prophesies this:

Zechariah 6:12-13

¹²and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah, ¹³even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. (ASV 1901, underlining added)

This is a remarkable Messianic prophecy and it very plainly describes the person who is the promised Redeemer, Jesus. He is also identified here as “*the Branch*”. This term is in other Old Testament passages as well (Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; 60:21; Jeremiah 33:15).

Also found in verse 6:12 of Zechariah, the Hebrew text says *Ish Hinneh*, which is translated as “*behold the man*”. “*Behold*” as a word identifying Jesus is also frequently employed in Scripture. “*Behold the Man!*” “*Behold My Servant!*” (Isaiah 42:1; 52:13), “*Behold thy King!*” (Zechariah 9:9), and “*Behold your God!*” (Isaiah 40:9). So, this word “*behold*” is used by God to call attention to the different aspects of His character as He appeared in human form to suffer for us! Here in the Zechariah passage (6:12) He is symbolically being crowned as He takes His office as the Messianic King in the Millennial Kingdom. In this verse, Jesus (“*the Branch*”) is said to build the Temple of God. This would be the Millennial Temple referred to in Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6-7; Micah 4:1-7 and extensively in Ezekiel 40-48. He will also “*bear the glory*” as He sits and rules on the Throne of Glory running the government of the world from David’s Throne in Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:6). Now He sits on his Father’s throne in heaven (Revelation 3:21), but in the Millennial Kingdom He will sit on His own Throne (Matthew 25:31). Finally, the Hebrew words *atsath shalom* translate as “*counsel of peace*” and this does not just mean a “simple peace”. If it were a “simple peace” the Hebrew words would be *vehayah shalom* and the text would be written “there shall be peace between them both”, or the peace (*shalom*) would be between two people. The word used here signifies peace among all the people of the world because Christ will be reigning on the throne of the entire world’s government in Jerusalem during the Messianic Kingdom.

Returning to Psalm 110, in order to affirm Jesus’ Messiahship, the degree of worldly control He as God will exert is affirmed by saying, “*The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*” Here we have God the Father (“*The LORD*”) saying to Jesus (who David calls, “*my Lord*”) “*Sit thou on my right hand.*” The New Testament affirms Jesus’ present position as at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12). Then the Psalm 110 text says, “*till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*” In other words, Jesus will return to battle all nations and put them under subjugation to Himself as the Leader of the World Government in the Messianic Kingdom. At that time all of the righteous indignation of a Holy God will be poured out upon this wicked world.

JESUS SUMMARIZES THE PSALM AND HIS MESSIAHSHIP

Mark 12:37

³⁷ David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly. (KJV)

Here, using the Psalm 110 with a rhetorical question, Jesus says that if David is calling the coming Messiah “*Lord*” as in Psalm 110, then how can He merely be a physical descendent of David? David knew that this would be a God-man who must be the one who would restore the Davidic Kingdom on earth (II Samuel 7:16; Amos 9:11-12; Matthew 19:28; Luke 1:31-33). Jesus directed this exposition of the prophecy of the Messiah from the Old Testament to affirm His Messiahship to the Jewish religious authorities (which they were rejecting) but “*the common people heard him gladly*”. Some religious rulers, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, no doubt did accept Him but Scripture only affirms that there were few. The Apostle Paul expands on this in his 1st letter to the Corinthians:

I Corinthians 1: 26-31

²⁶For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: ²⁷But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹That no flesh should glory in his presence. ³⁰But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: ³¹That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (KJV)

As Paul’s wrote these words, he urged the Corinthians to survey their own congregation. From a human viewpoint wisdom, influence, and high breeding are not the characteristics that easily find salvation in Christ Jesus. Look around you. Do you see the high and mighty coming to hear the simple Gospel of Christ? This is a rhetorical question to be sure, and most of the people that enter into God’s redemption are not the leaders of the world. Nor are they leaders of the large universities, who in fact perpetuate the anti-God studies of evolution, paleontology, philosophy and psychology. But God chose those who are of “low estate” to hear and understand as well as to believe.

Christ set the pattern for us to realize this truth. He was born in a stable to parents of low rank in the Jewish culture. The Jews were despised and persecuted. His parents had no noble family lineage according to the world’s system of monarchy, position, wealth and wisdom. He grew up as a tradesman in a remote town in the Galilean region of Israel, which was considered to be where the country bumpkins lived. In fact, even the poor of the population recognized this:

John 1:46

⁴⁶And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. (KJV)

He chose uneducated fishermen as the people who would spread the Gospel to the world. He never had a home, a career, an education, a wife or a position in society. He did not bring the Gospel to the highest authorities in the Jewish and Roman societies. He did not do a “top-down approach” following a recognized chain of command, as the world would expect. For Christ alone personified the wisdom from God (1 Corinthians 1:30) and in Him the Corinthians experienced righteousness, that is, justification (Romans 4:24-25), holiness, that is, sanctification (II Thessalonians 2:13-15), and redemption, that is, glorification (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 4:30). In the wisdom of God, the plan of salvation was accomplished by a crucified Christ hidden from the wise and learned but revealed to simple believers (Matthew 11:25-26). The fact that the Gospel came to the lowly in society and through the lowly demonstrates the fact that God cares for the poor, oppressed and marginalized people of this world. The Gospel offers riches more valuable than anyone can imagine. It cannot be seen and therefore, the high and lofty of this world do not see its benefit. All of our riches emanate from Christ Jesus and nowhere else. We cannot glory in ourselves for the gift that has been given to us:

Ephesians 2: 8-10

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)

Everything we have comes from Him. Because salvation is completely from God’s grace, any boasting on our part is nonsense. It is granted by God as per nothing we have done. If believers are going to boast about anything it should be only what the Lord has done:

Jeremiah 9:23-24

²³Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: ²⁴But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (KJV)

It is only through God that anything we have or are has been achieved. Further, He only considers our hearts and work within the body of believers to have value. So we who are saved should not boast in our being chosen, but be thankful for God saving us through His grace alone. We are richer than the world will ever know and will rule the world when the Millennium begins. As it says in Matthew 5:5 “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*” (KJV).

NEXT WEEK: REVELATION MSG. X

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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