

REVELATION – SERMON 18

THE LORD OF THE DOOR

Revelation 3:7-8

INTRODUCTION

- The final two churches of Revelation provide us with the best and worst of the seven.
- The Philadelphian church is a model church; one that every church should aspire to be like.
- There is no rebuke from Christ, only praise and encouragement.
- That does not mean it was a *perfect* church, seeing it was made up of imperfect Christians; yet they were faithful, though few in number and though facing persecution from their enemies, particularly the Jews.
- Philadelphia was named after King Attalus II, who was known for the love he had for his brother, Eumenes, and became known as Philadelphias – “one who loves his brother”.
- This name is a reminder to us that this is what the church ought to be characterised by (1 Peter 3:8; John 13:35; 1 John 3:14)
- The city suffered many earthquakes, and was destroyed by a great one in 17 AD, but was rebuilt by Tiberius.
- Philadelphia was in a fertile wine-growing district with Bacchus (Dionysus), god of revelry and debauchery, as the chief deity.
- It was known as “Little Athens” because of the many temples in the city.
- It was situated on an important trade route and was known as the “gateway to the east”.
- It has been called “the missionary city” due to its strategic location which enabled it to spread not only the Greco-Roman civilisation eastward, but also Christianity.
- Out of the seven churches, the Philadelphian is said to have survived the longest, continuing some centuries until the city fell to the Turks around the 14th century.
- The imagery of a key, doors and pillars give this epistle an architectural theme.

- It is to this church that Christ gives his longest and fullest description of Himself.
- It is the faithful servant who receives the greatest revelation of Christ (Amos 3:7; John 15:15)
- As the Lord encourages His faithful little flock in Philadelphia, He reveals *who* He is to the church, *what* He holds for the church, and *how* He provides for the church.

I. THE DIGNITY OF HIS PERSON

A. He that is holy

1. Holiness is an attribute of God (Isaiah 40:25; Revelation 4:8; 6:10)
2. Christ, as God, is altogether holy (Acts 2:27; 3:14)
3. In His incarnation, He remained free from original sin, as well as actual transgressions
 - a. Christ was *impeccable*, incapable of sinning (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5)
 - b. His perfect holiness made him fit to become the sacrifice for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. All that He ever says or does, in all of His offices, is perfectly holy
5. As Mediator, He bestows holiness upon His people (1 Peter 1:16)
 - a. In justification, they are *declared* holy
 - b. In sanctification, they are *made* holy
6. The church is called “an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9)

B. He that is true

1. This word means genuine and authentic
2. Christ, as God, not only speaks truth, but *is* truth (John 14:6; 18:37-38; 1 John 5:20-21)

II. THE DOMINION IN HIS POSSESSION

A. The key of David

1. This is a reference to Isaiah 22:22 where the LORD prophesied the removal of Shebna, a wicked steward under King Hezekiah, and replace him with Eliakim, a faithful steward
2. Eliakim was the key of the house of David, giving him access to the treasury of the palace, and representing great authority, being second only to the king
3. He is a type of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of David (2 Samuel 7:13-17; Matthew 1:1), who will sit on the throne of David (Luke 1:32), and who will have the government upon his shoulder (Isaiah 9:6-7)

B. The Lord Jesus Christ possesses all authority

1. He has the key of salvation (John 10:9; 14:6)
2. He has the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18)
3. He has the key of judgment (John 5:22)
4. He has the key to “unsearchable riches” to supply all our need (Ephesians 3:8; Philippians 4:19; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

III. THE DOORS OF HIS PROVIDENCE

A. Christ, as God, oversees His creation by His providential hand

1. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures (Psalm 103:19; Matthew 10:29; Hebrews 1:3)
2. He performs this work of providence via *concursum* – the harmonious cooperation of the divine agency (first cause) with natural agencies (second causes)
3. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33)
4. The heart of even the most powerful king “is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” (Proverbs 21:1)

B. Christ opens many doors

1. The Lord opens the door of faith in the souls of men and women (Acts 14:27; 16:14)
2. The Lord opens the door of opportunity to preach the gospel (Acts 16:6-10; 2 Corinthians 2:12)

3. The Lord opens doors in response to our prayers (Luke 11:5-10)
 - a. We must pray that God would “open a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ” both for ourselves and others (Colossians 4:3)
3. When God opens a great and effectual door, there are often many adversaries who oppose it (1 Corinthians 16:9)
4. The doors that Christ opens for His people may be often unexpected and not recognised as God given opportunities
 - a. The tragedies in Joseph’s life were doors that God used to bring him to Pharaoh’s palace (Genesis 50:20)
 - b. We need to recognise with Job, “*He knoweth the way that I take,*” even if we don’t (Job 23:10)
5. The Lord “knows thy works”, our circumstances and situation, and will not open to us a door that His grace cannot sustain us through, or that is greater than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13)

CONCLUSION

1. Christ opens the door of salvation to all, but it is not open perpetually (Matthew 25:10)
2. Just as God shut the door of Noah’s ark, so there comes a time when He closes the door of salvation (Genesis 7:16)
3. Christ has given to the church “the keys of the kingdom of heaven”, that is, to proclaim to the world the way of salvation through the Gospel of Christ (Matthew 16:19)
4. Are we using those keys to open the way to heaven for the lost sinners around us?
5. Often when God opens a door we are asleep to the fact and miss a divine opportunity (John 4:35)
6. Our role is not to force open doors ourselves, but to wholly submit to God’s will, trusting in Him with all our hearts, that He would direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6)