This will be a year of enhancement. Guard your heart. We are going head on in spiritual warfare unlike anything the world has ever seen.
Brenda Roberts

REVELATION CHAPTER THREE-Verses 7-13
THE SEVEN CHURCHES-PART SIX
A Look at the Church of Philadelphia: The Faithful Missionary Church
Handout 8
Prayer Study #407
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

PHILADELPHIA

Background Information

Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven cities. The city is located in Turkey in an area know for wine production. The principal deity in Philadelphia was Dionysius, the god of wine and partying. The Romans set up this city in order to promote Greek culture in Asia Minor. The city suffered repeatedly from volcanoes and earthquakes and was often referred to as *"the burned land."* A great earthquake came in 17 AD that almost completely destroyed Philadelphia and Sardis and ten other cities. Tremors from that earthquake were reported for years afterwards, making the people who lived there very insecure and the economy and civic life were disrupted for over 20 years.

At different times in its history, Philadelphia was renamed. When Tiberius Caesar was emperor, he gave generous financial aid to the city to rebuild after an earthquake, and the citizens honored him by renaming the city Neo-Caesarea, which means new city of Caesar. Later Vespasian replaced Tiberius, and he named the city Flavia, which was his family name. These names did not last, and eventually the people went back to the name *Philadelphia.* Today it is called Allah-Shehu, the City of God.

During the 1500s Philadelphia was the only self-governing Christian city in the entire Turkish empire. Here they were in the midst of Islamic Turkey. Twice the Turkish armies besieged the city, and twice they resisted to the end. Then between 1379 to 1390, they finally caved in and were captured.

7 And to the angel (messenger) of the assembly (church) in Philadelphia write: These are the words of the Holy One, the True One, He Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shall shut, Who shuts and no one shall open:

Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love. The *Phila* part literally means *friendly, favorable toward.* This is one of the Greek words for love. The other words are *eros*, which is sexual love; *stergo*, which speaks mainly of the love that family members have towards each other; and *agape,* which is the kind of love God has for each of us, and, which we should have for the Lord. Agape is totally unselfish, holds no offenses, and is sacrificial. *Delphi* simply means *city.*

Jesus uses several characteristics of Himself when He informs the people of Philadelphia who He is. First, He is the Holy One. Through scripture the Lord is known by the title as Holy (Revelation 6:10, Leviticus 11:44 & 21:8, Isaiah 6, and Isaiah 57:15 are a few examples where He is referred to as holy.)

In heaven the seraphim and cherubim constantly praise Him with the words *Holy, Holy, Holy.* Some believe that they sing out these words in three-word sequences because of the triune nature of God. Jesus was declared *holy* at His birth (Luke 1:35-*And the angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*); at His death (Acts 2:27-*For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*); and in His present priestly office (Hebrews 7:25-26-*Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*)

Next Jesus in this letter to the Philadelphians refers to Himself as *the True One*. Over and over in the Gospels, Jesus also says He is the True One (*true bread of heaven*, John 6:32-35; *true vine,* John 15:1; *true witness of God, Revelation 3:14, etc.).* When we know intimately this TRUE ONE, the Truth of knowing Him shall set us free (John 8:32). This is, I believe, the key to deliverance, i.e. knowing Him.

Thirdly, Jesus is the One who has *the key of David*. This key is referred to in Isaiah 22:22. In this Chapter 22, Hezekiah fires his treasurer Shebna and replaces Shebna with a more faithful person, Eliakim. Eliakim was then given a heavy key which he always carried on a piece of rope on his shoulder (remember where Isaiah prophesied the coming of the Messiah and the fact that the government would be upon His shoulder-Isaiah 6-7). This key symbolized Eliakim's position, which included his power to grant or deny others an audience with the king. Jesus is thus saving in this verse that He alone has the power to allow or not allow this access to the presence of FATHER GOD.

Finally, Jesus tells us that only He has the power and authority to open and close doors in our lives. We will look more at this in the next verse.

Thus, Jesus reveals His character as Holy and True. He reveals this to the Philadelphians who were faithful and trusted in the Lord. The Koran presents Allah as a capricious, changeable god, not to be trusted. Jesus, on the other hand, delights in and keeps His promises (1st Kings 8:56-*Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.)*

8 I know your [record of] works and what you are doing. See! I have set before you a door wide open which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept My Word and guarded My message and have not renounced or denied My name.

Here the Lord begins to offer commendation to the church at Philadelphia. Philadelphia and Smyrna are the only two churches of the seven, in which Jesus finds no fault. Jesus knows our works here on earth and what we are doing.

Jesus opens and closes doors for us. Paul speaks of this in 1st Corinthians 16:9-*For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries-*, 2nd Corinthians 2:13-*Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia*-and Colossians 4:2 & 3-*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.*

We generally see these doors as opportunities to share the Gospel with others, the door of salvation, and/or doors of deliverance and safety. In John 10:7 & 9, Jesus reveals Himself as the door of the sheep: *Then Jesus said to them again,* ***"Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep….I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."***

The importance of going through the door is illustrated by Noah's Ark, which was closed by God Himself, seven days before the flood began (Genesis 7:16) and by the door at the marriage supper, which the bridegroom opened to the five wise virgins but closed to the five foolish virgins.

In the situation that they were in, the Philadelphia Church members did not have much power against the powerful pagan society of Asia Minor, and yet they keep the Word and guarded His message and did not deny His name. We have talked extensively concerning the power of His name. I always delight in the power of the Name of the Lord.

In that Name we see the following scriptural uses, among others:

a. Let's joy come to the believer - Psalm 5:11, 33:21
b. Is the our defense against enemies - Psalm 20:1, 44:5
c. Gives the Lord's inheritance to the believer - Psalm 61:5
d. Causes us to dwell in Zion - Psalm 69:35-36
e. Purges us from our sin - Psalm 79:9
f. Expedites an answer from the Lord - Psalm 99:6
g. Blesses those who come in His Name - Psalm 118:26a
h. Helps us keep His law - Psalm 119:55
i. Brings the Lord's Mercy - Psalm 119:132

j. Helps the believer in times of trouble - Psalm 124:8
k. Cast out demons - Mark 16:17

Until John 14, according to Andrew Murray, "the disciples had not asked in the Name of Christ, nor had He Himself ever used the expression. Here, in His parting words, He repeats the word unceasingly in connection with those promises of unlimited meaning, '*Whatsoever,' 'Anything,' 'What you will,'* to teach them and us that His Name is our only, but also our all-sufficient plea. The power and the answer depend upon the right use of the name."

Finally, concerning His Name, I remind you of Malachi 3:16: *Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another; and the LORD hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and* that thought upon His Name.

9 Take note! I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and learn and acknowledge that I have loved you.

There are many parallels between the Church of Philadelphia and the Church of Smyrna. Here we see the same words concerning those who say they are Jews and the synagogue of Satan. Again, this is an indictment on the Jewish populations in those cities. These Jews were very hostile to Christianity and in their zeal against the Christians violated their own Torah laws, thus making them people *who say they are Jews and are not* or unfaithful Jews. The Torah, as we mentioned in our study of Smyrna specifically taught the Jews to treat non-Jews or Gentiles with respect (Leviticus 19:34). They were also prohibited from speaking ill of someone with the intention of negatively affecting their reputation or publicly humiliating them. Thus, these were Jews born Jewish, but their behavior did not coincide with the teachings of the Torah. Thus, they were serving the purposes of Satan rather than the One True God. The costs of their rebellion to the Torah will result in them bowing down at these Christian enemies of theirs and acknowledging that the Lord God of Israel loves these Christians.

10 Because you have guarded and kept My word of patient endurance [have held fast the [b]lesson of My patience with the [c]expectant endurance that I give you], I also will keep you [safe] from the hour of trial (testing) which is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell upon the earth.

The Lord has been patient with the Gentile Church for over 2000 years, and He expects us to be steadfast and patient as we await His return. This verse is a remarkable promise in which the Lord promises to keep this church and those who walk in obedience

as the Philadelphians did from the hour of temptation or trial. The implication is that Jesus will remove part of His church from this time, which will affect the whole world, not just Jews and Christians, as we will see in Revelation 6 through 19. In fact, the rest of Revelation tells us that all Gentile believers left will not be protected but will be killed (Revelation 7:9-17, 11:7, 13:7, 15, 17:8, 20:4), thus coming out of Great Tribulation.

11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one may rob you and deprive you of your crown.

A better translation for the word *quickly* would be *suddenly.* As long as the Philadelphians remain steadfast, they will inherit a crown. Only the Church of Smyrna and the Church of Philadelphia are promised a crown.

The Bible is full of those who did not *hold fast* and were robbed of their crown: Esau lost to Jacob; Reuben, the oldest son, lost to Judah; Saul lost the kingdom to David,

12 He who overcomes (is victorious), I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God; he shall never be put out of it or go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name.

He who overcomes will be a pillar in the Temple of God, just like Peter, James and John were pillars of the early church. The Philadelphians fled the city when they felt the tremors of an earthquake. Perhaps Jesus is telling them that they will be so firmly rooted in the foundation of Jesus Christ, that they will no longer have to flee but can stay in the manifested presence of God. The meaning could also apply to the custom of the day. In the cities of Asia Minor, when a prominent priest died after serving a lifetime, a new pillar with his name and the name of his father was erected in the temple.

In those times masters sometimes branded their initials on their slaves to show others whom they belonged to. This practice could explain *the name of My God* reference. This also might refer back to Numbers 6:27: *They shall put My name on the Israelites.* The Lord God told Moses that Aaron and the priests could pronounce this blessing over the people so that all might know that they were His people.

The name *New Jerusalem* is to be written on each faithful believer. This signifies that faithful Christians will be awarded citizenship in the city of God. Ezekiel says the name of New Jerusalem, the re-created city of God, is to be *the Lord is there* (Ezekiel 48:35). We do not know Jesus' new name and can only speculate what it might be.

Jesus uses this phrase *My God* four times in this verse. The only place in scripture where He uses this phrase apart from this one verse in Revelation is on the Cross: *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying,* ***"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"*** *that is,"* ***My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?."*** You may

wonder why He did not use "My Father, My father." Most likely this was because He was in our place as our substitutionary sacrifice.

13 He who can hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches).

Again, the Lord ends His letters to the churches with this phrase. We will be looking more at this phrase as we study the letter to the Church of Laodicea, where the Lord says that He stands at the door and knocks, when it is so imperative to hear what the Spirit says.

In Philadelphia, we see:

- **Name of Church:** Philadelphia is the City of Brotherly Love. We are frequently admonished in scripture to love the brethren. Loving the Body of Christ, and especially the local body, brings tremendous rewards to any church or ministry. Perhaps the most well-known verses of the verses concerning brotherly love and the unity accompanying that love, are found in 1st John 4:7-8 (*Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God)* and in Psalm 133:1 (*Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*)
- **Title of Jesus Christ:** Holy One, True One, One who hold the key of David, and One who opens and shuts
- **Encouragement:** The Philadelphians, even with little strength, are praised for patiently and steadfastly enduring, for keeping His Word and for not denying His Name.
- **Correction:** The Lord gives this church no correction!
- **Consequences for not repenting:** N/A to Philadelphia
- **Rewards for Overcoming:** a promise from Jesus to be kept the Philadelphians from the hour of temptation or trial; a crown; position as a pillar in the temple of God; the name of God, the name of the city of God and Jesus' new name (perhaps this is His nature) will be written on the believer
- **Conclusion:** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches* (Revelation 3:13).