

PHILADELPHIA LOVE IS A VERB

I. BACKGROUND

A. Geographical/Commercial/Political

1. Located: 28 miles southeast of Sardis
 - a. Region of Dangerous Volcanoes and Earthquakes
 - b. 17 A. D. – Earthquake almost completely demolished Philadelphia
Same earthquake devastated Sardis
Aftershocks were a regular source of panic, thus many inhabitants remained outside the city living in huts and booths
2. Commercial
 - Nothing of Note; Emphasis on Agriculture, Especially Vineyards
3. Political
 - Founded less than two hundred years before the birth of Christ. It was named for Attalus II, the king of Pergamum, whose loyalty to his older brother and predecessor, King Eumenes, earned him the nickname Philadelphus (“brother lover”).
 - Built for the purpose of spreading Greek Language and Culture
 - Original language of the area had died out by A. D. 19
 - Home to a temple built in honor of the Emperor Tiberius – a show of thanks for Rome’s rebuilding help after the earthquake.

B. Spiritual

1. Most commentators agree: the Church had been tested in a significant way
 - Worship of Dionysius: God of Wine

C. Other

- Only mentioned in Revelation 1 and 3
- Tradition has it that some from Philadelphia were martyred in Smyrna alongside Polycarp (155 A.D.)

II. THE LETTER TO PHILADELPHIA – Rev. 3:7-13

A. Who Sent It? Rev. 3:7

1. Christ
2. Description: Him Who Is
 - a. HOLY
 1. “Set Apart” from all Evil
 2. Totally pure; without blemish or moral contamination
 3. Christ assumes the title God gave Himself in Isaiah 40:25 –
““To Whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” says the Holy One.”
 - b. TRUE
 1. Christ hates falsehood and error
 2. No deceit in Him----RIGHTEOUS
 3. Christ is Genuine and Authentic: not Hypocritical or Unreal there are no discrepancies between what He tells us about Himself and how He really is.
4. What You See Is What You Get

- c. HOLDS THE KEY OF DAVID
 - 1. Isaiah 22:22 – Eliakim: The Keeper of the Keys to the King’s palace
No one could get into the palace except through him.
He also controlled access to the royal treasury and had authority to dispense its riches.
 - 2. Christ is the Keeper of God’s household: This symbolism may have two layers. First, Christ Himself opens the door for His people to enter into heaven and there is no power on earth or in hell that can shut that door to Christ’s followers. Second, Christ has opened the door for His followers to help others enter His Kingdom.
- d. OPENER AND SHUTTER
 - 1. Possible Interpretations
 - a. KEY TO THE DOOR OF SALVATION
 - OPEN
 - i. Hebrews 10:19-20 - Christ is the way opened through the veil in the Temple into the Holy of Holies – the presence of God
 - ii. John 14:6 - “I am the way...No one comes to the Father but by me.”
 - iii. Luke 13:24-28 – The Narrow Door
 - iv. Matthew 25:1-13 – Ten Virgins (this parable has both OPEN and SHUT aspects)
 - SHUT
 - v. Matthew 25:31-46 – Sheep and The Goats
 - vi. Luke 16:19-31 – Rich Man and Lazarus: there is a great chasm that cannot be crossed
 - *This is hard for some to accept.
 - b. KEY TO THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY
 - i. Acts 16:8-10 – Macedonian Call (OPEN)
 - ii. Acts 16:6-7 – Paul tried to enter Bithynia but the Spirit would not allow him to (SHUT)
 - 2. Conclusion
 - a. CHRIST HOLDS THE KEYS
 - b. Careful Balance
 - 1. Waiting for Christ To Open The Door
 - We can do more harm than good by barging through closed doors
 - 2. Seizing The Opportunities He Has Given Us
 - B. Church’s Strength v. 8
 - I KNOW:
 - a. Little Strength – the Church was apparently weak
 - may have been small or consisted of non-influential members of the community
 - b. You have kept My Word: obedient
 - did not compromise
 - c. You have not Denied My Name: LOYAL
 - Christ accepts Little Strength, but we cannot be satisfied with it. We must always strive to grow in Grace and Works. The fact that Christ mentions this may indicate that they were under pressure to deny Him.
 - d. Perseverance – Christ commands His Church to endure faithfully against the pressure and hostility of the world. Matthew 24:13.

C. Christ's Command

- a. v. 8: Recognize the Opportunity you have
Philadelphia was geographically situated at the gateway of the central plateau of Turkey. Beyond this small settlement lay the Kingdoms of Lydia, Mysia, and Phrygia.
It was a place of passage for merchants moving east/west.
The possibilities for outreach were limitless.
- b. v. 11: Hold on to what you have
- Crown: as Reward; not Royalty

D. Christ's Promise: 9-13

- a. Protections: v. 9-10
1. Your enemies will be humiliated – Jewish antagonism
 - Christ previously referenced the synagogue of Satan in His letter to the Church in Smyrna. Revelation 2:9. The Jews denied that Christ was the Son of God and opposed the spread of the Good News. In their opposition to the Good News, they were doing Satan's work. Christ confronted them with this truth in John 8:41, 44.
The phrase "who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie" indicates that though they were physical descendants of Abraham, they were not God's people. As the Apostle Paul simply said, "They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Romans 9:6.
 2. Protected from the hour of trial
 - Compare Rev. 2:10 – Smyrna: God does not deal with all the same way – some suffer, some do not
- b. Blessing
1. A Pillar – picture of solidity and stability
 - the people in Philadelphia were used to seeing only the pillars of temples standing due to the earthquakes; (Pillar=unshakeable)
 2. A New Identity
 - a. The Name of God – for all eternity we will bear the name of our Lord
 - b. The Name of the New Jerusalem – for all eternity we will be citizens of the New Jerusalem
 - c. Christ's New Name
 - We shall belong forever to God, Christ and His People

E. Two Doors:

- Christ invites us to go:
 1. IN through the door of SALVATION
 2. OUT through the door of SERVICE

III. SEIZE THE DAY

- What Opportunities Does Our Church have?
 - Rev. 3:8: "See, I have placed before you an Open Door"
- A. Opportunities Seized
 - B. Opportunities To Be Seized
 - C. Opportunities We Have Missed
 - D. Three Important Questions Regarding New Ministries
 1. Will it reach the Lost?
 2. Will it edify the Saints?
 3. How (not Whether) can we finance it?