

Revelation, Part 6 The Seven Churches — Philadelphia, Laodicea

We are looking at the last two of the seven churches of Asia - Philadelphia, Laodicea. These two churches are completely different from each other, one is faithful and the other is lukewarm. As with each of the other churches, the Lord's initial address indicates the message that is about to be presented.

Philadelphia was 28 miles southeast of Sardis.

This is a picture of the ruins of the St. Jean Church in the ancient city of Philadelphia. This faithful church was located in a small town that was established by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamos. It was established to be a center for Greek culture and language throughout Asia. It was positioned strategically for trade on the border of Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia on one of the greatest highways that was a gateway from Europe to the East. The word Philadelphia means "brotherly love." The city was known for its agriculture and vineyards and was wealthy and commercially important. Philadelphia was destroyed often by earthquakes.



Revelation 3:7 NKJV "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

To Philadelphia, Christ describes Himself as holy and true and He who has the key of David.

The word holy (hagios) means separate from evil. The holiness of God is indicative of the fact that God hates evil and stands in contradiction to Satan. True comes from the Greek "alethinos" which represents the real nature of God. He is being distinguished from the false gods that have been represented in the region around the seven churches.

In the Book of Isaiah, "The key of David" was given to Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah.

The things that were said about Eliakim are easily assigned to Christ. In Isaiah, the holder of the key of David was given the key to open and no one shall shut and to shut and no one shall open. All of the wealth of the house of David was given to the one who held the key. Here in Revelation, the greater promise is given to the seed of David, Jesus Christ. Where Isaiah prophesied of securing Eliakim's heritage, now in Revelation, Jesus Christ is given the everlasting throne and all authority.

Revelation 1:18 NKJV I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive

forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Now Jesus tells the church that He has the key of David. This is a testimony of the ultimate authority that Jesus possesses.

Revelation 3:8 NKJV I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Do you understand the significance of the Lord being able to give to the church an open door that no one can shut? The Lord sees that the church has little strength, but He is giving them an opening because they have *“kept His word and have not denied His name.”* This word appears to give them access to the riches of grace and power that are at the disposal of the One Who holds the key of David. The full extent of this promise has not fully been realized by the church. When the Lord tells this faithful church, “I know your works”, it sounds different from when He said it to Thyatira, the corrupt church. Little strength with God’s blessing is greater than great physical strength without God.

Revelation 3:9 NKJV Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

In Smyrna, the Lord Jesus promised that the “synagogue of Satan” would not prevail. In Philadelphia, the promise is much greater. This is a promise that those of the synagogue of Satan would come and fall down on their faces and confess that God was in the church of Philadelphia. The open door that is given to the church is an opportunity to win those who have persecuted believers. Nothing is as wonderful as the vindication of the saints when unbelievers are made to realize that God loves the church.

Revelation 3:10 NKJV Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

This is a word every faithful believer needs to hear. When you faithfully persevere, you will be rewarded.

“I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.”

This is a promise that the faithful church will not go through the tribulation that is to come on the world. The language here makes it clear that they will be “kept from” the tribulation. This is different from being “kept in” or “kept through.” It is impossible to see how Christ could make this promise if the entire Church were to go through the Tribulation.

Matthew 24:21 NKJV For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

What Jesus is promising is possible for any believer who perseveres and keeps His word.

Revelation 3:11 NKJV Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

This is one of the many promises of Christ's imminent return. Jesus' return for His church is going to be sudden and without warning. Encourage yourselves with these words if you are facing persecution or trial. Jesus is coming soon. In the meantime, He tells the faithful "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." There is a crown of life awaiting those who hold fast.

Revelation 3:12 NKJV He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

Notice the certainty and permanence of the reward that is promised. The temple of God is not the earthly temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is referring to a permanent place in heaven for believers who overcome. Christ will write the name of His God on them. This is the ultimate identification of the church with God. Not only will they bear His name, they will have the name of the city of God written on them. Their citizenship is in the city whose builder and maker is God. The Lord is going to say, "These are mine" and to certify that, He will write His new name on them.

Revelation 3:13 NKJV "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

We all want to hear this word of encouragement that was given to the faithful church of Philadelphia.

The final church to be mentioned is the church in Laodicea.

Laodicea was a situated about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and 90 miles east of Ephesus. It was a wealthy city with thriving textile industry, banks and medical school. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 62 A.D. but was rebuilt by its wealthy citizens. These are the ruins of the Roman temple at Laodicea. The people became spiritually complacent



because of their self-sufficiency. Somewhere around 361 A.D. almost no Christians were to be found in Laodicea.

Revelation 3:14 NKJV And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

“The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness and the Beginning of God’s creation” is a testimony that Christ has the authority, right, and veracity to examine the Laodicean church.

Who can better examine them? Some try to force this to mean that Jesus was the first of God’s creation. That idea is contrary to the all other Biblical texts. Christ is the eternal Son of God. “The beginning of the creation of God” refers to part that Christ played in the creation of all things.

John 1:1-3 NKJV In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Revelation 3:15-16 NKJV I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

The Creator God, Who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End is examining the works of the church.

It is a sad indictment that the God Who knows all things offered them no praise or commendation. This church had become spiritually lukewarm and detestable in the Lord’s eyes.

What caused their spiritual condition?

Revelation 3:17 NKJV Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' —and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

In their prosperity, they did not recognize their need of God.

Do you remember that Jesus spoke about the rich and how difficult it was for them to enter into the kingdom of God? (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25) In that lesson, Jesus said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” The problem with the Laodicean church was they came to believe that their wealth could buy them anything. In Christ’s evaluation, they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Each of these words depict their true spiritual condition. They are opposite of how they saw themselves. They thought they were wealthy and needed nothing.

Watch how Jesus addresses their relief and salvation.

Revelation 3:18 NKJV I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

How can they “buy” what they are lacking?

When people lack nothing, it is easy to presume that all things are accessible through their wealth. They cannot buy what they are lacking with their gold. Jesus refers to “gold refined in fire.” This is something they could not buy with corruptible wealth. They need spiritual gold, or spiritual wealth. This richness and inheritance is only available through Christ. In Christ, we find true wealth. In Christ, we gain an incorruptible inheritance that does not pass away.

When we gain the true wealth that is in Christ, the remedy for what is spiritually lacking can be attained.

- In Christ, the church is clothed in white garments that cover the shame of our nakedness. Those white garments are the righteousness of God that is in Christ. Without Christ, we are naked and unclean.
- In Christ, the church is enabled to see. The Holy Spirit anointed eye is enabled to see. This true vision comes from the Holy Spirit. Jesus was telling them they were not seeing themselves as God was seeing them. Their blindness could only be cured by the remedy Christ was giving. Laodicea had a medical school that produced an eye salve for common vision problems. Jesus was offering a true remedy for the inability to see. If the church has their eyes anointed by the Holy Spirit, they will see.

Revelation 3:19-20 NKJV As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

The Lord’s love and care for the Laodicean church is witnessed in the fact that He is rebuking and chastening their lukewarm condition.

It becomes apparent that the steps they need to take in order to gain true wealth and help is found here. The lukewarm must stir themselves up and repent. Complacency must be intentionally addressed. Repentance is Godly sorrow for personal actions. The Lord’s loving care for them should bring them to a place of repentance. This invitation is personal to anyone who will hear the Lord’s voice.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

Take note that the Lord is standing at the door waiting for a response to His loving concern. The Lord is not going to knock the door down in an attempt to get people to respond to Him. Patiently, He knocks and calls. Those who

respond will find the true wealth they need. They will enjoy a true relationship and fellowship with Christ. This refers to the joyful abiding in Christ and the participation in His richness. With Christ on the inside, we are enabled to fellowship and share in the marvelous grace and richness of God.

Revelation 3:21-22 NKJV To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

This is one of the many great promises given to people who overcome. They will be given a place to sit with Christ in the heavenly places. This access is compared with the access that Christ has with the Father. Jesus closes the messages to the churches with the address: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Do you recognize the urgency that is being addressed to the churches? We must have ears that hear what the Spirit is saying.