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Revelation 3:7-13

"The Model Church" The Church in Philadelphia

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The last two of the seven letters to the churches were written to the churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea. These churches represent the spiritual condition of the Church today and, as we get closer to the return of Christ, the Church will diverge into two streams represented by these churches. One is the true church (Philadelphia), and the other is the apostate church (Laodicea). One is made up of genuine Believers, and one is made up of pseudo-believers. One will be raptured (taken up to heaven) before the Great Tribulation, and the other will go through the Great Tribulation. One is evangelistic, and one is lukewarm. To the church at Philadelphia, the Lord has nothing bad to say, however, the Lord has complaints against the church at Laodicea.

The city of Philadelphia and the church are not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. The city was built in the 2nd Century BC by a Hellenistic king, Attalus II, for his brother, Eumenes, thus the name "city of brotherly love." It was situated on the lower slopes of Mt. Tmolus, which consists of volcanic hills that made for fertile soil, which were essential to their vineyards. They worshipped Dionysus, ¹ the Greek god of wine. They were also known for their drunkenness and immorality. An earthquake in 17AD nearly destroyed the city in its entirety. Today, the city is called Allahshehr, Turkey, which, in Arabic, means "city of Allah."

The church in Philadelphia is the model church, not the perfect church. We might call it the Evangelical Church, because it represents the true, evangelical, Bible-believing Church that loves the Lord and loves to make him known. In this study we'll learn more about the four distinct points we should emulate.

¹ The Roman name for Dionysus is Bacchus.

They Evangelized Faithfully

1. **Revelation 3:7-8a** - *"I have placed before you an open door..."*
2. The open door is a reference to evangelism.
3. **1 Corinthians 16:9** - *"... a great door for effective work has opened to me [in Ephesus]..."*
4. **2 Corinthians 2:12** - *"When I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ [I] found that the Lord had opened a door for me..."*
5. **Colossians 4:3** - *"And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ..."*
6. **John 10:9** - *"I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved."* (KJV)
7. If we are faithful to the message of Christ, we will be involved in the process of evangelism, which is a door the Lord opens and no one can shut.
8. The church that is involved in "winning souls" for Christ is doing the work of the Lord, and the church that isn't involved will soon be dead.
9. **Romans 1:16** - *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes..."*
10. The philosophy of ministry at Cornerstone Chapel is to "simply teach God's Word simply... and watch what God will do!"

They Made God's Word A Priority

11. **Revelation 3:8b** - *"... you have kept my word..."*
12. The people of the church at Philadelphia weren't spiritual giants, but they kept God's Word.
13. **Jeremiah 23:29** - *" 'Is not my word like fire,' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks rock in pieces?' "*
 - a. The fire burns away the garbage in your life.
 - b. The hammer breaks up the hardness that's built up in your life.

14. The Word of the Lord is like bread and honey.
 - a. **Matthew 4:4** - “ *‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’* ”
 - b. **Psalms 119:103** - “*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*”
15. The word of the Lord is like a sword.
 - a. **Hebrews 4:12** - “*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*”
16. The word of the Lord is like water, which washes over us and cleanses our hearts.
 - a. **Ephesians 5:26** - “*[God cleanses us] by the washing with water through the word...*”

They Acknowledged Christ Publicly

17. **Revelation 3:8c** - “*... have not denied my name.*”
18. They were not ashamed to be associated with Christ, and they were not embarrassed to be called Christians.
19. **1 Peter 4:16** - “*If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*”
20. The Lord wants to be proudly displayed in our lives both now and forevermore!

They Endured Patiently

21. **Revelation 3:10** - “*... you have kept my command to endure patiently...*”
22. The true Church does not give up when things are bleak; they persevere and trust God, remaining faithful to the end.
23. **Hebrews 10:36** - “*You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*”

- a. This is a clear and strong promise that God will rescue the true Church from the coming Great Tribulation.
- b. The Bible describes a horrible, catastrophic series of events that God will bring upon the Earth, (**Revelation 6-18**) which is also called Jacob's Trouble (**Jeremiah 30:7**) and Daniel's 70th Week (**Daniel 9:27**).
- c. **Matthew 24:21** - *"For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Revelation 3:7-13** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss the quote Pastor Gary used from The Rebirth of America, by J. Edwin Orr.

"In the mid 1800's, people began to be converted at the rate of 10,000 a week in New York City. The movement spread throughout New England. Church bells would bring people to prayer at eight in the morning, twelve noon, and six in the evening. The revival went up the Hudson and down the Mohawk. Baptists had so many people to baptize, they couldn't get them into their churches. They went down to the river, cut a big square in the ice, and baptized them in cold water. In one year (1857), more than one million people were converted. The revival crossed the Atlantic, broke out in Northern Ireland and Scotland and Wales and England, South Africa, South India—anywhere there was an evangelical cause, there was revival..."

- a. Do you think the general population of the United States would be open to a work of the Holy Spirit like this?
 - b. In your opinion, what, if anything, needs to take place before the Spirit of God could move in this way?
4. How would you rate your effectiveness and your readiness when it comes to evangelism?
 5. Read and discuss this quote from Pastor Gary: "The church that is involved in 'winning souls' for Christ is doing the work of the Lord, and the church that isn't involved will soon be dead."

- a. Allow the people in your group to share any experiences they've had regarding dead churches or "soul winning" churches.
 - b. Read and discuss [Romans 1:16](#).
6. Would it be said of you that you read and apply the Word of God in your life in such a way that it is clearly evident?
 7. Spend time talking about the times when the Word has impacted your life in such a way that you felt as though you'd been through a fire or been hit with a hammer. (See #13 above)
 8. Read and discuss [Psalm 119:103](#) and [Matthew 4:4](#).
 9. In what ways is the Lord prominently and proudly displayed in your life?
 10. Are the four commendations of Christ for the church at Philadelphia a prominent part of your life?
 11. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: be willing and ready to take advantage of open doors to share their faith in the risen Lord and be willing to acknowledge Christ publicly; to keep the Word of God at the center of their life; remain steadfast in their relationship with the Lord, so that in the difficult times, they will be able to persevere and endure with patience.



Note: Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).