

Philadelphia – God opens the door

I. About the City

- A. In each of these letters, God uses something about the city -- its history, commerce, and religious makeup -- to speak to the people about His views and direction for them.
- B. The word “Philadelphia” doesn’t mean “the city of brotherly love” but “brother lover.” It was established by King Attalus only two hundred years before this letter was written. He was known for his devotion to his brother.
- C. Philadelphia was to be an outpost, exporting Greek and Roman culture to the wild peoples and lands on the fringe of the Empire.
 - 1. It was considered a missionary city – spreading the good news of Roman language, culture, and religion to the barbarians.
 - 2. It was successful enough that the Lydian language ceased to be used by AD 19.
- D. It was an earthquake prone region and, in fact, suffered complete destruction during Christ’s lifetime. Tiberius came to the rescue and rebuilt it. The people renamed their town “Neocesarea” in his honor. It was one of several names given to this city. By the time of this letter, things were so confused that there were three different names in use for it.
- E. After the earthquakes, the only thing standing were the columns of the temples. That becomes important in this letter.
- F. We don’t know who established the Philadelphia church, but history tells us that it prospered from AD 100-160, primarily under a prophetess named Ammia. She was known as someone as gifted as Agabus and the four daughters of Philip in her ability to teach the truths of scripture.
- G. When the entire area came under control of the Muslims, Philadelphia held out for a very long time. Its Christian community was strong, existing until 1392.

II. The Door

- A. God often used doors and keys as symbols. In Isaiah 22:20ff the transfer of the Keys of David meant that God was once again in control of his temple.

- B.** They would have understood that Christ was actively involved with them. (Isaiah 9:6,7) The one who held the key was the one who held the throne of David. (The angel's prophecy to Mary in Luke 1:31-33)
- C.** All of the persecutors the world could muster wouldn't be able to shut the door unless Jesus wanted it shut. (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Colossians 4:3)
- D.** The open door meant an opportunity to continue service, evangelism. In the middle of the coming (and present) persecution, God was promising them the continued opportunity to do well for Him.
 - 1.** I find it fascinating and meaningful that Christ did not release them from their obligations to him. Instead, he gifted them with a charge to keep working and a promise that He was with them.
 - 2.** That is where we can find the main message of this letter to us: our entire purpose is caught up in living for Jesus, spending ourselves for his cause. Everything else is extra.

III. Rescue From the Congregation of Satan

- A.** Romans 2:28,29: Jews who were no longer of God's chosen people fought against the Christians. They launched a series of persecutions against the Christians, charging them with being unfaithful to Rome; a danger to the community.
- B.** These very laws would later be used against the Jews, driving them out of Philadelphia while the Christians remained and prospered for centuries. God kept his promise to keep them safe during the persecutions and temptations that would destroy many other cities.
- C.** Those who overcame would be pillars – the only remaining structures after an earthquake.
 - 1.** When Samson pulled down the pillars, the worshippers of Dagon's temple were destroyed.
 - 2.** The faithful in Philadelphia would be part of the pillars and ground of truth. They would never fall.
 - 3.** In the temples of Philadelphia, sometimes a rich or powerful individual would have a pillar dedicated to him, with his name and the name of his god written on it. Christ said he would do that for his people.

4. In a city whose name changed with the passing of emperors, Christ was giving them a name that would last forever. He was associating with us.

Name four people who died in the flood.

Name three people who led the Pharisees... Sadducees...

Want to be somebody?

Do you want your life to matter?

Do you want to leave this world better than you found it?

God has opened a door for you – not so that you could spend yourself on things of this world, but so that you could continue your higher calling and reach out to the world in his name.