

S.W. March - 22, 81 AM
Aron Park July 5, 89 Prayer Meeting
N.W. April 15, 2001 Easter

"THE CHURCH WITH AN OPEN DOOR"

Revelation 3:17-13

INTRODUCTION:

About 28 miles south east of Sardis was the city of Philadelphia. A city that was founded in 140 B. C. by the King of Pergamos, (Attalus II.) Whose other name was Philadelphus. The city was named Philadelphia after him. The geography of this city is very interesting as to its location.

1 - First, note the location. For one thing, the Lord said I have set before thee an open door. It was located where three great countries joined together. The land of Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia. All bordered at Philadelphia. So for this purpose Attalus founded the city -- that it might be a missionary city. Spreading the Greek language, the culture, the literature, and the manner of life. To the wild tribes up into the interior.

Bristol Va + K marks on st
Place See seven states

2 - Second, notice about this city - the letter reflects the life of the city. "Him that over cometh, will I make a pillar, in the temple of my God." It was a great custom in Philadelphia if a magistrate, a civil servant, had done some unusual thing or some noble thing. The citizens would honor him. By placing a great pillar in one of their temples. With his name inscribed upon it. This commemoration would be a perpetual memorial. For the great man whom the city delighted to honor.

N.W. Church should be known as Family of Bro. Love! Unity among Believers is found in their union with Christ / Build Bridges instead of Fences! God's spirit doesn't work where people are divided. As spokes get nearer the Hub of the wheel they become closer together!

3 A third thing about this city, the Lord said - and he shall go no more out. Philadelphia was located in a vast volcanic field. And it was subject to earthquakes. Many times the whole city would be destroyed by the quakes. And people

V. 12

fled for fear.

V12B
But at this point, Christ is saying, I am going to give you perpetual, everlasting, eternal security. That we have in him.

Again, our Lord says, I will write upon him the name of the new city, New Jerusalem.

In 17 A. D., an earth-quake destroyed the city completely. The same earth-quake destroyed Sardis. Tiberius was Caesar of the Roman Empire. He re-built Sardis and he re-built Philadelphia. In gratitude for this kindness, Philadelphia renamed their city Neo Caesarea. "The new city of Caesar." It reverted back to its old name in years later. But the incident in history corresponds with the words that Christ said - I will write upon him the name of the New Jerusalem.

4- Philadelphia, in the fourth place, was the last great trench of Christianity when Asia Minor was over-run by Islamic Turks. The historian given - talks about these seven churches in Asia. How that Philadelphia had been saved by the prophesy of courage. Among the Greek colonies, the churches of Asia, the church of Philadelphia stood erect.

To (this very) day, it is largely a Christian town. Our Lord had nothing but words of commendation. For Smyrna, the martyr church. He had almost nothing but words of commendation for the missionary church at Philadelphia.

Each one of these churches represents a great period in history. The Ephesian church represent the Apostles. Such as Peter, Paul, James, and John.

The Smyrna church represented the martyrs -- the trial and the persecution. And the heavy pressure of the Roman empire. The church had to go to the catacombs.

Pergamon church is the church of the establishment. It was wed to the authority and the power of the Roman Empire.

The Thyatiran church was called the church of infallibility. It was wrapped up in robes of scarlet and gold. And had a prophetess to speak by the name of Jezebel.

The Sardian church was a church of the dark ages. When God found some shining stars in the reformation to come forth for the glory of his people.

The Philadelphia church is a church of our closing era. It is the church of the missionaries. The church of the evangelists. The church of Bible society, and Bible distribution, and of soul-winning. It is the church of the world-wide preaching of the son of God. It is the church of the bold mission thrust - that every man shall hear the Gospel by the year 2,000. And unto the church, of Philadelphia, write these things -- saith he that is holy, he that is true, and he that hath the keys of David. To open and shut. Behold, I have set before Thee an open door.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SPEAKER - V. 7.

The description of Christ in this letter is confirmed as we read -- and the angel of the church in Philadelphia writes these things. And here is the description of Christ given. And this ought to bring encouragement and hope to all of us.

V. 7 / 1 - First, he that is holy. This talks about the character of Christ. One that is holy. And there is nothing in him that will compare, since he is absolute. He is the standard of perfection. And the Bible says this about his character. As applied to the diety in the Old Testament, the divine Christ has separated from all limitations. His holiness.

2 - Second, he is true. Holiness talks of inward aspects of his character. Truth speaks about his actions. This is fulfilling the divine ideal. He is truth itself. There are many false Messiah's but he is the genuine one. There are many who will come and deceive with lying wonders. And with falsehoods. Paul says for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But after their own lust, will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 2 Tim. 4:3-4.

Such deception will not effect the children of God, because we know the one that is truth.

In the Old Testament, we find that he is presented as the great "I Am". And asked in whose name he should say that he had come. He said to him, you just say, "I Am".

Ell

You know it is tragic when a door is closed. A chaplain visiting a hospital during the Vietnam war spoke to a soldier who was about to be discharged. He said to him - what are your plans now. The boy said, I have no plans. Surely, you have some plans before you entered the service. Aren't you going to pick up things where you left off. Oh yes, I had some plans. But not now. The chaplain said, well, what happened. You could pick up and go right on. And the boy replied. I planned to be a concert pianist. But that door is closed to me now. He drew from the covers a steady, handless arm.

Now this is a tragic story, shattered dreams. Vanished hopes and closed doors. He had planned to be a pianist. But the circumstances, his injury made it impossible. The door was shut forever against him.

Many times this is the story of life itself. We build our air castles. We dream of tomorrow. But somehow the door is shut. The physical door is closed. Every person listening to me, could tell of some closed doors in your life. The door is slammed shut. There seems to be no way in the world you would ever open it.

Whatever you dislike in another person, be sure to correct in yourself. Stay humble or stumble. The higher the ape climbs the more he shows his tail. When you are coasting, you are either losing speed or going downhill.

V.S

But I want to have you read with me in this 8th verse. How that God opens doors and listen to what he says about this church here in Philadelphia. He says, I know your works. I have perfect knowledge of all things. And no one could add anything that he does not know. And God knows the doors that have been closed in your life. And he is aware of these. As John Knox translated Psalm 139. A person living outside of Christ would have reason of fear because of what we read here. Lord, I lie open to thy scrutiny, thou knowest me, when I sit down and when I rise up again. Canst read my thoughts from far away. Walk I, or sleep I, thou canst tell. No moment of

mine, but thou art watching it. ⁴ Before, ever the words are framed on my lips, all my thoughts are known to thee. Such wisdom, as thine, is far beyond my reach. No thought of mine can attain it. ⁹ Where can I go then, to take refuge from thy spirit, to hide from thy view. ¹⁴ I praise thee for my wondrous fashioning. For all the wonders of thy creations. For my soul hast fully known. And this mortal frame hast no mysteries for thee. Who didst contrive it in secret. Devise its pattern. There in the dark recesses of the earth. All of my acts, ¹⁶ thy eyes have seen. A riddle, oh my God. Thy dealings with me - so vast their scope. ¹⁸ As well count the sand as try to fathom them. And where that skilled mind, thy own being still confronts me. Scrutinize me oh God, as thou wilt, and read my heart. ²³ Put me to the test. And examine my restless thoughts. See if on my false paths, my heart is set. And thyself, lead me in the ways of old."

Christ knows our inner-most being.

^{V.S. 13} This church, he also noted here this open door -- that thou hast a little strength. Now this does not mean spiritual - but refers to her membership. They were few, they were not wealthy. They had not denied the Saviour, the anointed, one. Now this might be contrasted with churches that may be rich and have everything. There may be a few, little strength, but they continue on. Sometimes, you wonder, and you think about here is a little group of people in a country church. They exist for years. They are small in membership. But they continue on faithfully. Thou hast a little strength. The world usually measures strength by numbers. But this is not the Lord's method. The Lord deals here with a remnant. His greatest works here - you remember. We read that if it had not been for the remnant, the little group - then things would have been different. The Lord started, you remember, with twelve. Soon there were 120, soon 500, and then 3,000. And still the number was small compared with the world at large. Paul had very few associates as he tried to

without limit. There is an opportunity with children -- working with children and seeking to bring them into the Kingdom. There is an opportunity with young people and with adults. If you want to serve God - behold, I set before thee an open door.

And this is the great missionary age of the church. And we may be getting close to the end of that time. Because there are some doors that are beginning to close. We can no longer go to Russia and preach the Gospel openly. We can no longer go to China and preach the Gospel openly. The doors to India have been closed for years. And people go to that vast land, and have to enter under some kind of educational program. They deny the request for Southern Baptist Missionaries in India. Because the door is closed.

In 1792, William Carey went before his brothers and pleaded the World-Wide cause for missions. The moderator said, "sit down, young man. Sit down."

When God wants to convert the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine. We look in amazement upon such a situation. When a young minister of the Gospel wanted to preach to the lost world. When Carey went to India, the company - the East India Company interfered with him, and he was forced to go 18 miles up the Ganges River, into Danish Colony, of Serampore - where he build schools and his colleges. And he sent out preachers to preach the Gospel of the Son of God. The great English speaking world has followed in the steps of the missionary.

In 1813, Adoniram Judson was intercepted by the India Company, and he went down to Rangoon in Burma. Where he labored six years without a convert. But God was with

him. In that terrible war of 1824-26, between England and the Bermese, Judson was placed in a prison - in a filthy vile place. Tied with five pairs of chains, and he was sick with fever. From the heat of the jungles. He was almost destroyed. But, he was kept alive and fed and nurtured by his faithful wife, Ann Hasseltine. But he lived to see when the Lord turned thousands of natives to the saving faith of the Christ.

We could re-count stories of these great heros of the cross, who have gone through the open door and have spread the Gospel around the world.

W
A janitor taught a Sunday School Class of orphaned boys, in Washington. Leading them to Christ, was a crippled boy. He led him to know Christ. Now that nameless janitor has been forgotten. But the name of James E. West, became chief scout executive of the Boy Scouts of America. That little crippled orphan boy went to the top place in the usefulness of service. Simply because the janitor used an open door.

There are open doors to you. The question is, are you using them.

The Victories
III. PROMISES TO OVER COME - V. 10-12

V. 10
V. 10 - Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, translated here temptation. Because thou hast kept my word, I will keep thee in the hour of tribulation. God will take his people out of

the way and behold quickly.

Patience which means endurance - is saying here. I have patience and I will help you. He states that severe trials are to come. It refers to the time of trouble and disaster. Which preceded the return of Christ.

same opposition at Smyrna -
V. 9 - In view of this, hour of trial, with the synagogue of Satan - the chief opposition of this faithful little church. This opposition was not by pagan worship from without, or doctrinal corruption from within. It was enmity from unbelieving Jews. These wicked men envied the men of God and their door of opportunity. And would be glad to shut it against them.

Hence, he declares the synagogue of Satan and opposite from the law of God. He says, they will come yet and recognize the church of the living Christ. These persecuting Jews are to fall down and to know that the Lord loved it.

V. 11 - The key note of the book is found here. V. 11. Behold, I come quickly - the return of Christ is regarded as near. It may occur at any time. And the church may be delivered. Such hope will inspire us for loyal effort. Holding fast and doing our task. Now Sardis was threatened by the coming of the Judge. Upon their worldliness. But Philadelphia is encouraged here - that by his coming, there will be a crown that will be given. They are to be kept away from something - as in Noah's day. He was kept away from the flood. But he was preserved through it.

V. 12 - He addresses this to the individual members of the church. He gives them assurance of a permanent place in the temple of God. We speak symbolically here

of a building, a magnificent temple.

This is imagery - it is beyond anything really that we can enter into. That here is a - for example, the church is called a pillar in the ground of truth. And this is for the glory of God.

✓ The Key over Death "

He makes two great promises.

1 - First, pillar. We are to be pillars. We shall go no more rounds. As the course of the priests - when death took them away. Or as in Eden, our first man Adam, went out. A column is fixed in a building to give stability. It is one of the most useful parts of a building. This is a monument of the freedom, the power, and the grace of God. There will never be defaced and never be removed.

In contrast, Peter, James, and John were pillars in the Jerusalem church.

We often speak of people today as being pillars in the church. Well, we think of them in the highest honor of the church.

2 - The second promise is the inscription. The honor is increased by the inscription on the pillar. There will be three great names which will seal this -- the name of God, the consecrated to his service, the name of the city. Denoting that we will be citizens there. And the name of Christ - a proof of his ownership. Now all of this is a witness of the faithful and the true, followers of Jesus Christ. And I will write upon him the name of my God, the name of the city, New Jerusalem.

SERMON THOUGHTS

This morning is so full of images - the empty tomb - the voice of angels - Mary's encounter with Jesus - the promises made through the prophets coming true it is so rich - so full - so basic to who we are as an Easter People.

Friday - sad Friday - the day we call Good Friday - is brushed aside in one glorious moment of realization one moment of startling fear and overwhelming joy - a moment of holy awe - as the significance of what is seen - and what is unseen comes crashing in.

Jesus is Risen. Death could not hold him. And if it cannot hold him, it cannot hold us.

All that Jesus said about life and death all that was understood only as idea - as a concept - as a vision is made real in that empty tomb and in that encounter in the garden.

And we today / - we standing here - before these rough and rude crosses - Behind Choir -
- we standing here before these emblems of suffering and shame
We share in it.

We share in the promises made to Children of Israel and to the entire world through the Prophets. We share in the promises made to the disciples Emmanuel - What we have seen the Lord and to all who listened to Jesus as he walked towards his death upon a slab of wood like these.

We share in it - for the word that he spoke to them - and to us -- is made true and real by what we testify to this morn, it is made true by the resurrection. Because from time you shall live

And more yet - it is made true by the testimony of our hearts hearts here among us - this very day - who have been touched by the spirit of the living Lord hearts here which have heard Jesus knocking upon the door and have opened that door and had him come in and dine with them. hearts that encountered the risen Christ what is now almost thousands of years after the stone was first rolled back and the tomb shown to be empty and our Lord risen.

What is this Easter morn?

It is God's promise of a new day
It is God's promise of a new life
It is God's promise of a new world coming to pass in our midst.

Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.

Praise be to God for his great love
And to Jesus his only Son.
And to the Spirit
All three in one.
Amen.

my st. Norman Deal my mother died
Harty family - Kinned good by 11 P.M.
Breach N.S. - my own Robinson - said Norman
if you haven't left her -
"you ain't ch - sat Pulpit choir
I see with you!
I see R a box - Pulpit
Have many members
life & eternal