

Sent: Wednesday, October 20, 2021 2:09 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Revelation 3:7-13

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord!" (I Corinthians 15:57-58)

We're in the second part of our study of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ--a revelation given by God, speaking through His Son, Jesus Christ, and an angel, to the beloved apostle John, exiled on the Isle of Patmos! God had some important things He wanted His people, then and now, to know and understand--things that not only were and are, but that are still to come!

So far, we've seen His revelations to the angels of five of the seven churches He had chosen to address--the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis--the "loveless" church, the "persecuted" church, the "compromising" church, the "corrupt" church, and the "dead" church! All five of these churches received commendations, warnings, and exhortations, and promises for faithfulness from the Lord, and "overcoming" the world! The church of Smyrna was the only church so far that didn't receive serious and significant reprimands, while the church of Sardis received only token commendation!

John Walvoord reminds us that the church is "not a place with no weaknesses; it's a fellowship of those who are aware of their weaknesses and long for the strength and grace of God to fill their lives! It is, in a sense, a 'spiritual hospital' for those who know they are sick and needy"!

And with that understanding, we looked at the Lord's message to the church of Philadelphia!

The city of Philadelphia was located on a hillside in what is now modern-day Turkey, about 30 miles southeast of Sardis--founded around 190 B.C. by the king of Pergamum, King Attalus II, who named it Philadelphia, meaning "brotherly love," as a tribute to his brother whom he loved! Information on how the church of Philadelphia was founded is not mentioned in the Bible, but it is believed connected with the apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus, as part of the "Macedonian vision" he received from the Lord!

The Lord identified Himself to the angel of the church of Philadelphia as the One "who is holy, who is true, and who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens"! A direct claim of His deity! And, because He is God, He let them know that He "knew" (and "knows") all about what was going on in the church--and in the lives of its members! That they had "a little power," He said, but that they "had kept His word, and not denied His name"! And because of that, He said, He had "put before them an open door which no one could shut"!

We were (and are) reminded that "little is much when God is in it"! And that when we "keep His Word" and "uphold His name," He "opens up" doors of opportunity and can accomplish things through us beyond our wildest expectations, despite great obstacles that may confront us!

The apostle Paul wrote, in I Corinthians 16:8-9, that he felt led to "remain in Ephesus...for a wide door for effective service had opened to him, and there are many adversaries"! And, in Colossians 4:2-3, he asked the Colossian believers to pray for him that God would "open up a door for the word, so that he might speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which he also had been imprisoned..."! Just maybe that might have had something to do with what happened in Philadelphia! (As I studied for this lesson, I was reminded of growing up as a kid--outside Philadelphia, in the 1940-50's--hearing of the radio ministry of Dr. Merrill T. MacPherson, who pastored the "Church of the Open Door," in Philadelphia! The name always struck me!)

Getting back to our text, the Lord also said, in Revelation 3:10, that because the believers of the church of Philadelphia had "kept the word of His perseverance" (in other words, "persevered in their faith"), He would "keep them from the hour of testing, that was about to come to upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth"! Constable calls this one of the most debated verses in Revelation, because the "hour of testing" cited seems to be a clear reference to the coming Tribulation (which is discussed in great detail in upcoming chapters of Revelation 6-19). And this is one of the passages referenced by many Biblical scholars in making the case that we as believers will not be going through the coming Tribulation period but will be "raptured" prior to its coming! The so-called "pretribulation" view of the "rapture of the church," which is what our church (IBC) also teaches!

Constable notes that the combination of the verb and preposition (of verse 10), in the Greek, means that He would "keep them out"--not "preserve them through" the tribulation! Walvoord notes that the deliverance is not only from trial, but from "a period of time in which the trial exists"! And, interestingly, although the word "church" appears 19 times in the first three chapters of Revelation, it is not used again until Revelation 22. In other words, there's no reference to the church in the entire, lengthy discussion of the tribulation, in chapters 6-19. In fact, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any passages relating to the tribulation period!

The Bible also speaks of the "imminent" coming of the Lord, which seems to support to this position! I Thessalonians 4:16-17 says: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord! Therefore comfort one another with these words!"

Renald Showers, in his definitive study of the rapture of the church, makes the point: "In light of the concept of the imminent coming of Christ and the fact that the New Testament does teach it, we can conclude that the 'pretribulation rapture' view is the only view of the rapture that comfortably fits the New Testament teaching of the imminent coming of Christ! It is the only view that can honestly say that Christ could return at any moment, because it alone teaches that Christ will come to rapture the church before the tribulation period begins, and the nothing else must happen before His return!"

Revelation 3:11 continues along this line: "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown!" The Lord's coming is described as an imminent event, one that will come suddenly without announcement--not necessarily immediately! And so, the church of

Philadelphia is urged to "hold fast" to their testimony for Christ in order to receive their reward at His coming!

And the text closes with another great promise for those who "overcome"! The term "overcomer" is a prominent term in the book of Revelation, the Greek word stemming from the "[nike](#)" (pronounced nee'-kay) which, according to Strong's Concordance, means "victory," implying a "battle" and a victory won! The apostle Paul wrote, in Romans 8:35-39, of the power believers have through the Holy Spirit to overcome the attacks of the enemy and become "more than conquerors through Him who loved us"!

For the Philadelphians, who experienced earthquakes and great turmoil in this world, those who "overcame" were promised to be "made pillars in the temple of God" (figuratively speaking), thus being eternally secure and "unshakeable" and having written on them "the name of God and the city of God," including a "new name," which is not given and which we'll only know when we get there apparently!

So, be like the Philadelphians! Hold fast! Abound in the work of the Lord! Be faithful to the end! And show some "brotherly love" along the way! It will be worth it all!

Lowell