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Introduction to

The Letter to Philadelphia (Part 1)

Revelation = The Unveiling

Review

It's the Revelation that God the Father gave to His Son Jesus who gave it to John.

It's more than a vision because John says in ch 1: what he saw was the physical appearance of Jesus Christ in His resurrection body and he described it.

- The Consummation of all things
- The only book promising a special blessing to the reader ch 1:3
- 404 verses containing over 800 allusions to the Old Testament
Which means that the more you know your Old Testament the more you will understand it.
- It presents the climax of God's plan for man ie. you and me. It's personal.
- There are three divisions to the **Book ch 1:19**
 1. The things which you have seen - The Vision of Christ in **chapter 1**
 2. The things which are - The Seven Churches **chapters 2 & 3**. They exist in the present until Jesus takes them away. These two chapters are the most important in the entire book. Jesus Christ Himself wrote them. Most people think there are 14 epistles in the New Testament but these 7 are also epistles written by Christ. So there are 21 epistles in the New Testament. 3 times 7.
 3. The things which will take place after this. **Chapters 4-22**
That is the things after the churches as that is what ch 2 & 3 are about.
Yesterday is a memory, tomorrow is a hope today is a gift (that's why it's called the present)

Just as Jesus carefully explains the meaning of what Jesus is seeing ie. The mystery of the seven candlesticks and the seven stars so we find the same thing in the rest of the book. It's all revealed in the Old Testament.

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He that has an ear is repeated through all the letters and is plural. It's to ALL the **churches**. Both local and future.

The churches at the time had a local practical issue that needed dealing with.

1. **Local** churches
2. **Admonitory** level to all churches and each letter applied to all churches in varying degrees. Also to all of the Church age.

By using those seven letters you can map the spiritual condition of any church and every church will have elements of all seven. Some more than others. It's not there for us to try and find the weaknesses of all other churches but rather to make sure that our church is sound. But we take the things in these letters to help us in our discernment, so we don't get involved with something that is blatantly off track.

3. **Personal** (Homiletic)

The Holy Spirit has designed these seven letters to apply to each one of us personally. So far this has been easy to see, but there is a fourth level.

4. **Prophetic** - **we** have been seeing how they lay out the history of the Church and if they were in any other order it would not make sense.

Seven elements to each letter

1. The Name of the church is relevant to its message.
2. The title that Christ chooses to describe Himself relevant to the letter. (which can be found in ch 1)
3. Commendation
4. Concern
5. Exhortation
6. Promise to the Overcomer (the individual within the church)
7. He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

We need to be aware as we go along of all of these elements.

2 churches have nothing good said about them and 2 churches have nothing bad said about them.

Last time we looked at Sardis, which followed on from Thyatira which was very Pagan in its structure and very descriptive of what we know as the Medieval Church. Very descriptive of the Roman Catholic Church. And History shows us how accurate this was.

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Then we get Sardis. The Reformation followed the Roman Catholic era and the stranglehold it had on the people began to be broken but not without cost. The Reformation started so well and thousands willingly gave their lives for their beliefs in Salvation by faith.

Many commentators have a field day with Thyatira because of the atrocities carried out during that era but are very lenient with Sardis. However we saw that Jesus was not happy with the way the church ended up during the latter part of the Reformation. Much good was done but it didn't go far enough. So Jesus said 'You have a name that you are alive but you are dead.' These are such strong words.

Not weak or struggling or backsliding but 'you are dead.'

Sardis was a city of failures. Thought invincible but vulnerable. They didn't learn.

So we saw the rise of ever more Denominational churches and because they became weak on doctrine as time went by they became dead. They left out doctrines they didn't agree with so the Millennial reign of Christ wasn't taught. Even though there are over 1800 references to it in the OT.

The introduction of Replacement Theology came about plus absence of Devotional life in individuals.

Towards the end of this era the True saving Gospel of Jesus Christ was rarely heard in churches. Although there has always been a remnant following the Early Church practises.

Therefore there is no good news about this church. No Commendation. Even though we think of it as being basically alright.

So we've been through the

- a. Apostolic Church, Ephesus
- b. The Persecuted Church - Smyrna (These 3 had the promise to the)
- c. The Married Church - Pergamos (overcomer in the body of letter)
- d. Medieval Church - Thyatira - they are told if they don't put things right they **will go** through the Tribulation.
- e. e. Denominational Church - Sardis
- f. Missionary Church - The church everybody wants to be part of and covers a period of time **1745 - 1950**

Revelation ch 3:7-13.

Letter to Philadelphia ("The Church of Love")

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write...

Philadelphia

28 miles SE of Sardis.

The youngest of the cities, now known by its modern name as Alasehir, (which means city of God or exalted city) was built in the area acquired by Pergamos in 189 B.C. King Eumenes II, King of Pergamon, Attalus 2nd was his brother, Philadelphus, ("One who loves his brother"), after which the city was named, for his loyalty and affection for Eumenes. Philadelphian coins show the two brothers as completely alike in height, features, and dress. Incredibly loyal to one another.

(Dionysys, the god of wine, was the principal deity - drunkenness was a chronic social problem here) and the city well situated also on the imperial post road from Rome and Troas to Pergamos, Sardis and to the interior of Phrygia. It was a virtual **gateway** to the high central plateau of Asia Minor and thus became an **outreach centre** for spreading the Greek language and manners into the eastern parts of Lydia and Phrygia.

This missionary character of the city seems to be stressed in the letter to the church of Philadelphia and they also became known as a church that reached out to others. This is what the Lord loved about this church. They were missionary minded.

Philadelphia commanded and guarded an important pass through the mountains, it was known as **the gateway** to the eastern highlands. By this path imperial communications from the harbour at Smyrna and Lydia in the northwest region are maintained with Phrygia in the east. The officials there had the power to open and close this door as they willed. Through this portal pass the mail, trade and commerce passed to the wide regions of central and eastern Lydia.

Even its history shows us that it was the gateway to other cities and the people in charge had the power to shut or close the gateway.

This is interesting because Jesus later introduces Himself as the One with the keys of David, with the power to open and shut doors.

Jesus is speaking into this church at Philadelphia and they would immediately grasp the language He is using and relate it to themselves.

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The area (called Katakekaumene, "the Burned Land") was a highly volcanic region and suffered repeatedly from earthquakes. The people lived in fearful expectancy of the 'big one.'

It was almost completely destroyed in the disaster of 17 A.D., which devastated Sardis and ten other cities. (Tremors were reported for years afterwards). Civic and economic disruption lasted for more than twenty years.

When you look at the promises in the light of the things happening in Philadelphia, that they lived in earthquake area and constantly in and out of the city and often living in tents outside the city as it was safer.

Generous assistance and financial relief from Tiberius caused the citizens to name the rebuilt city Neo-Caesarea ("New City of Caesar").

Later, in the time of Vespasian, it was changed to Flavia, his family name. The name changes were short-lived and the old name Philadelphia was soon revived. Prosperity was never fully regained. The city was under a legal jurisdiction of which Sardis was the centre.

The church suffered at the hands of the large Jewish community in the city. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, writing to the Philadelphian church a few years after John's Revelation referred to the Jews, who had so long persecuted the Christians there, as being converted and turning in contrition to those whose adversity they had caused. This trend is reflected in the letter itself.

Philadelphia was distinguished from all other cities by

1. It was a city of outreach
2. The people lived in dread of disaster
3. Many of the people lived outside of the city
4. They took on the name of the imperial god

The **church** was known for brotherly love. A parallel with the two brothers who reigned in Philadelphia.

Jesus calls us His brethren. **Heb 2:11** and we are called sons of God

1 John 3:1-2

Title of Christ

7 "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"**':

Holy and True - The Character of Jesus

"Holy"

- "Holy" (**Rev 6:10; Lev 11:44; 21:8; Isa 57:15**); Song of the Seraphim (**Isa 6:3**). Holiness is an attribute which should inspire a certain amount of fear - reverence even terror if we think about **Isaiah 6 or Ezek 1:28** the Throne of God.
- **Cherubim, Seraphim, why do they say Holy three times?**
Jesus is proclaimed Holy: -
 - at His birth (**Luke 1:35**).
 - at His death (**Acts 2:27**).
 - in His present priestly office (**Heb 7:25**).

With regard to the prophetic element The **Holiness** movement which was also a missionary movement, began with John Wesley. He was born in the UK June 17th 1703- March 2nd 1791.

John Wesley came from the Moravian Revival in 1727. This revival happened because a man called Nicolaus Zinzendorf prayed fervently for revival

Quote: 'I have but one passion - it is He, it is He alone. The world is the field and the field is the world; and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ.'

This man started a prayer meeting, and this prayer revival lasted over a hundred years. It was known as the hourly intercession. It lasted longer than the founder. That prayer meeting started the Great Awakening. It affected so many people and other countries. It went everywhere.

From this people went out all over the world with the gospel. The Moravians were very missionary oriented and sent people out worldwide. John Wesley went to the American Indians. Others went to Greenland, West Indies, Caribbean, East Asia, the Orient. Moravian missionaries were the first large-scale Protestant missionary movement. They sent out the first missionaries when there were only 300 inhabitants in Herrnhut. Within 30 years, the church sent hundreds of Christian missionaries to many parts of the world, including the Caribbean, North and South America, the Arctic, Africa, and the Far East. They were the first to send lay people (rather than clergy) as missionaries, the first Protestant denomination to minister to slaves, and the first Protestant presence in many countries.

John Wesley with his brother Charles, and George Whitfield, took the Bible to America and held tent meetings. George Whitfield (born in Gloucester in 1714) began to preach to the

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coal miners and one day it began to rain, and the coal miners began to run away to get out of the rain. This didn't stop George, he shouted out 'you can hide from the rain, but who will hide you from the wrath of God' As he said that all 500 miners dropped to their knees and began to repent in the middle of the rainstorm.

The Wesley followers became known as the Methodists.

The Moravians beautifully explained their motivation for Missions in the article below:-

Quote: 'The simple motive of the brethren for sending missionaries to distant nations was and is, "*an ardent desire to promote the salvation of their fellow men, by making known to them the gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

It grieved them to hear of so many thousands and millions of the human race sitting in darkness and groaning beneath the yoke of sin and the tyranny of Satan; and remembering the glorious promises given in the Word of God, that the heathen also should be the reward of the sufferings and death of Jesus; and considering His commandment to His followers, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, they were filled with confident hopes that if they went forth in obedience and believing in His Word, their labour would not be in vain in the Lord. They were not dismayed in reflecting on the smallness of their means and abilities, and they hardly knew their way to the heathen, whose salvation they so ardently longed for; nor by the prospect of enduring hardships of every kind and even perhaps the loss of their lives in the attempt. Yet their love to their Saviour and their fellow sinners for whom He shed His blood, far outweighed these considerations. They went forth in the strength of their God and He has wrought wonders in their behalf.

Moravian 1791 Evangelical Report

(A

History of the Moravian Church by J Taylor Hamilton)

So the Church of Philadelphia, the early Missionary church became the outworking of the Missionary church in the 1700's and beyond when for the first time there was a huge awakening to the plight of lost sinners and a passionate desire to take the gospel everywhere because they had a love for those who did not know Jesus Christ.

A man called Jonathan Edwards used to read his sermons verbatim. One of his most famous sermons was called **Sinners in the hands of an Angry God**.

'written by [British Colonial](#) Christian theologian [Jonathan Edwards](#), preached to his own congregation in [Northampton, Massachusetts](#), to profound effect, and again on July 8, 1741 in [Enfield, Connecticut](#). The preaching of this sermon was the catalyst for the First Great Awakening. Like Edwards' other works, it combines vivid imagery of [Hell](#) with observations of the

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world and citations of the [scripture](#). It is Edwards' most famous written work, is a fitting representation of his preaching style, and is widely studied by [Christians](#) and historians, providing a glimpse into the theology of the [First Great Awakening](#) of c. 1730–1755.

This is a typical sermon of the Great Awakening, emphasizing the teaching that Hell is real—a place that actually exists. Edwards hoped that the imagery and language of his sermon would awaken audiences to the horrific reality of hell that awaits them should they continue living without calling on Christ to be saved. The underlying point is that God has given humans a chance to confess their sins. Edwards said that it is the mere will of God that keeps wicked men from the depths of Hell. This act of restraint has given humans a chance to believe and trust in Christ.'

This can be found online.

When he read his sermon the first time there was such an anointing that people began to hang onto the rails and bannisters because they felt they were falling into Hell as he was preaching this. And they called out to God to save them and on their way home they were crying out to God for mercy. This began the Great Awakening in America, and when the American constitution was written one third of it was based on scripture because those men were moved by the revivals at the time.

Back to the title of Christ

Title of Christ

7 "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":

1 Peter 1:15-16 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

"True"

- Alethinos, real, genuine; truth in contrast to falsehood (**John 17:3; 1 John 5:20**).
Jesus is saying I Am the genuine One.
- **Jeremiah 10:10** *But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.*

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2 Chron 15:3 *3 For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law;*

Ps 119:160 *The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.*

With the advent of the printing press the Bible became accessible during the 1700's and it went out so people could read it for themselves. It took them out of the dark ages and into the light. The light of God's word.

- Prophecy of Zecharias (**Luke 1:68-79**). Speaks of this
- His kingship rests upon the bedrock of His character (**Psalm 2; Ps 24, etc.**). He can be trusted. This is exactly the opposite of the Allah of the Koran who is capricious and spiteful.

Of the 7 churches Philadelphia is faithful to being loyal and competent ambassadors of Jesus Christ. All the rest had problems this one doesn't.

"Key of David"

7 "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":

In order to understand we need to look at what the Word of God tells us about the Key of David. We hear of Shebna and Eliakim in **2 Kings 18 & 19** but learn even more from Isaiah.

Isaiah 22:15-25 (where Eliakim is replacing Shebna the treasurer)

Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts:

"Go, proceed to this steward, To Shebna, who is over the house, and say:

16 *'What have you here, and whom have you here,
That you have hewn a sepulchre here, As he who hews himself a sepulchre on high,
Who carves a tomb for himself in a rock?*

17 *Indeed, the LORD will throw you away violently, O mighty man,
And will surely seize you.*

18 *He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball Into a large country; There you shall die, and there your glorious chariots Shall be the shame of your master's house.*

19 *So I will drive you out of your office, And from your position he will pull you down.*

Shebna got above his station. He had a lot of power and as the Kings treasurer he had access to the wealth which he misused. But God hated what was going on and so He said He was going to take the Key of David and give it to Eliakim, which means God is exalted.

20. *'Then it shall be in that day, That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah;*

21 I will clothe him with your robe And strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem And to the house of Judah.

22 ***The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.***

23 I will fasten him as a peg (nail) in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.

24 'They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. 25 In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'the peg (nail) that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the Lord has spoken.' "

The prophecy is against Shebna, an officer in the court of Hezekiah, a good and noble king. Shebna was a wicked, deceitful, and proud man who, as some Jewish historians maintain, conspired with Assyria in an attack on Jerusalem. Shebna probably was elevated to his position as household treasurer during the reign of Hezekiah's father, Ahaz.

The Lord saw Shebna's pride and wickedness, and He sent Isaiah to proclaim judgment on him. The main point of the prophecy was that Shebna would be brought down and another man, Eliakim, would be put in his place over the household. Eliakim was a servant of the Lord, faithful and trustworthy, and he would rise from a lower position to become a great officer in the court.

This passage reminds us that God is in control of everything, and though it might seem as if wicked men will never be removed, He can bring them down in a moment and replace them with His good and faithful servants. This was what happened in Judah.

A wicked man was removed from office and a man after God's own heart was put in his place. We need never fear that prideful men will truly succeed in their quests for power, for the Lord will judge them for their crimes.

So here in this account is one of the allusions in the Old Testament that Jesus is referring to. It is a reference to the **Messiah** who would be killed, executed.

"Key of David"

- Eliakim (when Shebna, Hezekiah's treasurer was deposed and superseded; **Isa 22:19-24**).
- Given Full administrative authority: Eliakim was given the key. He carried this heavy key on a loop slung over his **shoulder**, indicating his power to grant or deny others **an audience with the king**. He alone provided access to the presence of the king. As the treasurer he was also in charge of the Kings wealth. This key was known as the **Key of David**. The one who carried it was given tremendous power and authority. Like King David.
- It is also a Messianic term: **Isa 9:6,7; Luke 1:32-33; Matt 28:18; Rev 1:18**. The peg /"nail" is messianic. Jesus is called the Nail. Jesus has the Key of David. There is a connection between the Key of David and the Nail.
- **The Key of David** represents the transfer of power from one to another. In the passage it gets transferred from Shebna to Eliakim.

There is a Hebrew copy of part of the Book of Revelation. We know it was in Greek. In Greek **Rev 1:18** says I have the keys of death and Hell and in Hebrew it says I have the Nails of death and Sheol. That's so interesting in the light of this passage. In 200 AD the Messianic Jews would have in their pockets some nails. To remind them of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Another interesting fact of those days was that bent nails were used as keys.

Jesus was basically saying **I Am the Key**.

- The cross is in v.25.
- The words in Isaiah 22 change into a prophecy about the Messiah.

"Keys to the Kingdom" Jesus Gives To Peter (this is what the Catholics pick up on saying that he is the first Pope)

Matthew 16:15-19

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

petra {pet'-ra} a rock, cliff or ledge; a large stone.

Petros {pet'-ros} Peter, a stone.

Jesus is commending Peter for his courage in proclaiming Jesus as the Christ the Son of God.

Jesus is using a play on words here. He's not calling him Simon here.

Peter in his first letter talks about stones or rocks.

- Clarified in his 1st Epistle (**1 Pet 2:4-9**). "Keys of the Kingdom" There's a phrase that sounds like an oxymoron. **A Royal Priesthood**. If you're Jewish you know that the Priesthood does not come from the Royal line. Judah is Royal and Levi are the priests and the two don't intermingle. Peter is using a strange phrase here. Speaking of the Church, you are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**.
- (**Matt 16:19**); Peter responds first to the question that Jesus asked them **all**. He is usually the spokesman.
Jesus then says some remarkable things which if there is no background knowledge makes it sound as though Peter is the one on whom the Church will be built which is where the Catholics get the idea.
- two chapters later He gives the keys to all the Apostles (**Matt 18:18**)
- Door opened to Gentiles (**Acts 10**). Peter was the one who opened the door to the Gentiles. That's what Acts 10 was all about.

The Foundation Stone?

1 Peter 2:4-8

⁴ Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

"Behold, I lay in Zion

A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And, he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"

⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. (Jews)

A Royal Priesthood?

1 Peter 2:9

*9 But you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;*

Peters whole presentation of the rock or stone isn't himself, it's Jesus Christ. So it's important to look at **Matt 16** within the context of **Matt 18** and **1 Peter 2:4-9** otherwise it is out of context and can be confusing.

Only three who have ever been called a king and a priest: Melchizedek, Christ, and the "24 Elders..." (of Revelation 4 & 5). The Church.

19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." **Matthew 18:19, 20**

We have the authority and power in Christ to bind the enemy (forbid, shut the door on him) and loose his hold on us **Ps 146:7-8**; and we have the authority and power to permit or open the door to give the enemy entrance and allow him to bind us (**Luke 10:19**).

The church of Philadelphia's doors were wide open, meaning that they would spread the Gospel to the world, while the doors of persecution were shut.

The great persecution of missionaries in China happened in the 1950's and many missionaries had to flee and the door was shut. It remains shut to this day.

Founder and director of the **China** Inland Mission (CIM) Born at Barnsley, Yorkshire, England, **Hudson Taylor** 1832-1905 sensed by the time **he** was 17 that God was calling him to **China**.

We can all be missionaries right where we are. The great commission Jesus gave for each one of us is 'go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'

That is the least we can do when Jesus has done so much for us.

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