

Mount Up Wednesday
The Wednesday Night Bible Study Ministry of
East Mount Zion Baptist Church
Dr. Brian A. Cash, Lead Pastor
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The Study of Revelation
The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia

Message to Philadelphia:

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens, and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

8 “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

The History of Philadelphia:

A city of ancient Lydia in Asia Minor on the Cogamus River, 105 miles from Smyrna. It stood upon a terrace 650 ft. above the sea. It was noted for its agricultural products but was afflicted by earthquakes which destroyed the city several times. Philadelphia is not so ancient as many of the other cities of Asia Minor, for it was founded after 189 B.C. on one of the highways which led to the interior.

It was named for its builder, Pergamum, Attalus, Philadelphus. Its name means “brotherly love.” It sometimes bore the title of “Little Athens” because of the magnificence of the temples and other public buildings which adorned it. Philadelphia quickly became an important and wealthy trade center, for as the coast cities declined, it grew in power and retained its importance even until late Byzantine times.

Significance of the Letter:

Christ describes Himself as “the One who is holy and true, who holds the key of David, and who is able to open or shut a door which no one else could open or shut. The holiness of Christ is a

frequent truth in Scripture (I Peter 1:15), and being holy He is worthy to judge the spiritual life of the Philadelphian church. “The key of David” seems to refer to Isaiah 22:22, where the key of the house of David was given to Eliakim who then had access to all the wealth of the king. Christ earlier had been described as the One who holds the “keys of death and hades” (Rev. 1:18). The reference here, however, seems to be to spiritual treasures.

There was no word of rebuke to the church at Philadelphia. The words “I know that you have little strength and yet you have kept my word and not denied my name” became the basis for His commendation. Instead of a rebuke from Christ they were given a promise because they were willing to endure patiently.

The promise was, “I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” This is an explicit promise that the Philadelphia would not experience the tribulation period beginning in the 6th chapter of the book of Revelation. This statement would infer that the church would be taken out of the way prior to the tribulation happening. With all the discussion surrounding post-tribulation and mid-tribulation, it is difficult to dispute Jesus’ declaration of “keeping the church from the ‘hour of trial.’” Since these letters speak to the church universal, this statement also pertains to us, the church, today.

Additionally, Jesus made other promises such as “I am coming soon,” not meaning literally soon, but suddenly. Another one was that the overcomers would become “a pillar in the temple of God.” This, of course, is symbolic of the permanent place in heaven for believers. The entire New Jerusalem will be the ultimate temple (21:22). He continued to say that “He would write on him (the overcomer) His new name.)

The letter concludes with his familiar salutation “He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The promise given to the church at Philadelphia and the challenge to continue to be faithful is certainly God’s Word to His whole church today.

What is your definition of “holy?”

What is the dictionary definition of holy?

Would you describe yourself as holy? Why or why not?

Why is God “holy?”