

# REVELATION

## Philadelphia and Laodicea

Revelation 3:7

February 24, 2024

### Philadelphia (3:7-13)

**Philadelphia (modern-day Alasehir, Turkey) was located on the banks of the Cogamus River, about 25 miles southeast of Sardis.**

### The City

- Was the youngest of the 7 cities.
- Was founded 189 BC – either by Attalus II Philadelphus, king of Pergamos and named “Philadelphia” because of the love he had for his brother, Eumenes OR the other way around.
- Was situated on a high volcanic plateau – making the surrounding land fertile – vineyards were popular.
- Was intended to be a “missionary city” promoting Greek language and culture.
- Stood on the imperial trade route connecting all points east and west of the city.
- Was sometimes referred to as “Little Athens” because of its pagan temples and other public buildings.

### The Church

- The church receives no rebuke. The church is faithful, but not spiritually strong. Pagan influence has greatly impacted their spiritual life and their gospel witness.

### To the angel at the church in Philadelphia write:

**Jesus presents Himself as “The Holy One, the True One,” “The One who has the keys of David,” and “The One who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.”**

### Jesus’ appraisal:

- I have given you an open door which no one will be able to shut. The church is weak but Christ has promised to set before them a door that the power of the enemy cannot shut.
- I know you have kept My word and did not deny My name.
- I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan – who claim to be Jews, but they are not – come and bow before your feet and know that I have loved you because you have kept My endurance.
- I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is about to come on those who dwell on the earth (the wicked).

### Jesus’ counsel and warning:

- I am coming soon; hold fast to your faithfulness so that no one can take your “stephanos” crown (crown of victory).
  - If they hold fast to the tiny spark of faithfulness still burning – no one, not even Satan himself, will be able to take the crown of victory reserved for them.

### Appeal to hear what the Spirit says to the churches

### Promises to the overcomers:

- Kept from hour of trouble.

- Will be pillars in the temple.
- Will never leave the temple.
- Will have the name of God.
- Will have the name of the city of God.
- God's new name will be written on them.

**\*\*\*\*\* This message coincides with the situation in Christianity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1755-1844). This period was characterized by a great revival of Protestantism. Various movements revitalized genuine faith in the saving grace of Christ, which resulted in the restoration of the spirit of Christian fellowship and self-sacrifice. The church was driven by a genuine desire to carry the gospel to the whole world. As a result, there was a great propagation of the gospel that had never before been experienced.**

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### **Laodicea (3:14-22)**

**Laodicea (modern-day Eskihsar, Turkey) was located at the junction of several important trade routes about 45 miles from Philadelphia. Because of its favorable location, Laodicea became one of the greatest commercial and financial centers of the ancient world.**

#### **The City**

- Was known for its fine black wool.
- Minted its own coins.
- Was famous for its medical school and for its treatment of eye diseases.
- The citizens were proud of their commercial, financial and industrial prosperity. *According to Roman historian Tacitus, when the city was devastated by an earthquake in 60 AD, the citizens were so rich and filled with self-confidence that they refused imperial help and rebuilt the city using their own resources.*
- Had one major problem - no local source of water:
  - Miles of aqueducts supplied water to the city from a hot spring near Hierapolis as well from Colossae, known for its cold mountain water. Whether it was the water coming from the hot springs or cold water coming from the mountains, by the time it reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm.

#### **The Church**

- The church was in such a bad condition that Jesus has nothing positive to say to it. The members are not charged with sin, apostasy, or heresy, yet, no other church receives such a stern rebuke.

#### **To the angel at the church in Laodicea write:**

**Jesus presents Himself as, "The Amen," "The Faithful and True Witness" and "The Ruler and Originator of God's creation."**

#### **Jesus' appraisal:**

- I know you are neither hot nor cold - I wish you were either hot or cold. Because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth.
- I know that you say *"I am rich and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,"* and you do not know that you are wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked.
  - The members regard their wealth as divine favor and are therefore, in need of nothing else. In contrast to the Christians in Smyrna, who are poor but spiritually rich, the Laodiceans are rich in material goods, yet are spiritually poor. They live in a city famous for its eye treatment, yet they are spiritually blind. Their self-deluded pride and self-confidence prevents them from seeing themselves as they truly are.

### **Jesus' counsel and warning:**

- Buy from me gold refined in fire (*tested, proven faithful*) that you may be rich.
- Buy from me white garments (*symbol of salvation*) that you may clothe yourself, so that the shame of your nakedness may not be exposed.
- Buy from me eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see (*to see their true spiritual condition*).
  - These - refined gold, white garments and eye salve - are not free gifts. 1<sup>st</sup>, the Laodiceans must recognize their true condition, which is only possible through the discerning influence of the Holy Spirit. Next, they must repent of and turn their backs on their pride, complacency, and self-sufficiency to finally be in a position to receive the spiritual riches Christ is offering.
- As many as I love I discipline and reprove.
- Behold, I am standing at the door knocking; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat supper with him.
  - The whole church has been admonished, but now, Jesus addresses individuals in the church. All those who open the door and welcome Him in will have an intimate, loving dinner with Him. Eating a meal together refers to an intimate relationship with a person - in this case with Christ.

### **Appeal to hear what the Spirit says to the churches**

#### **Promises to the overcomers:**

- Will sit with Jesus on His throne.

**\*\*\*\*\* This message represents the spiritual condition of the church today. This last church exists in peculiar times of great political, religious, and secular upheaval, and faces challenges not faced by previous generations. Yet, the church is self-sufficient and lukewarm - struggling with faithfulness and credibility. Christ's warning has far-reaching implications for all who are part of the church at the closing period of earth's history.**