



"8 Great Truths: Snapshots From Jesus in The Book of Revelation"



Teacher's Guide

The Church @ Philadelphia - Though You Are Weak, Yet He Is Strong Week 7 – July 18, 2010

Opening Announcements and Prayer

Icebreaker: Why does a woman take the name of a man when they are married? How long does that married name remain with her? How might that married name relate to Christians in our faith marriage?

Transition: This letter provides us a wealth of information about taking our marriage to Christ seriously and living it out successfully. It also gives insight to the benefits of such great faith.

Read Revelation Chapter 3:7-13

- **City Tour** - Using information from Craig Koester's web tour to provide the following information:
<http://www2.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/main.htm>
 - Culture and Government
 - 30Mi SE of Sardis
 - Founded by Attalus II or his brother Hermeneas II. Attalus was so devoted to his brother that he was also known as *philadelphus* - The one who loves his brother
 - Also willed to Rome by Attalus III in 133BC
 - Located in a fault zone that was so active that the citizens actually lived in the surrounding area in single-story dwellings and went into town only to conduct business to avoid the danger of the larger buildings falling on them during earthquakes
 - Some coins call it *Neo Caesarea* during the time of Gaius and Claudius and after AD69 with the ascension of Vespasian and the Flavian dynasty it is called *Flavia* indicating close ties to Rome and veneration of the emperors
 - Locates on the North/South trade route
 - Commerce and industry
 - Agriculture, especially grapes and wine
 - Industry, especially textiles and leather
 - Religious practices
 - Temple of Dionysus - god of wine and obvious choice in a winemaking region.
 - Dionysus is also known as Bacchus in the East
 - Temple of Zeus
 - Hestia, goddess of hearth and home - also a common choice of agricultural regions
- **The Letter**
 - 3:7 - Picture the author
 - The holy and true one
 - Holy and true is only used here and in 6:10 of Jesus and God
 - There are no other occurrences of this pairing in the rest of the Bible
 - The holder of the key of David
 - In chapter one he holds the key to death and Hades

- In Is 22:22 the key to the house of David and the opening and shutting imagery is present. It is the key to the restoration of the kingdom.
- Consider also the binding of the Dragon (Ch 20) and the opening of the way of life
- In a sense, Jesus holds the master keys.
- What he opens, none can shut and what he shuts, none can open
 - This clearly speaks to ultimate authority and power; he is supreme over all others.
 - What he begins no one can stop and what he wants to stop no one can continue

Questions for discussion:

- How might the concept that Jesus holds the master key, and can open and shut things no one else can, impact Christians who might have faced torture or imprisonment for their faith?
- How can this same concept apply to us today?

- 3:8 - 10a - Archival image of Focused church
 - An open door before them
 - Jesus has set them up opportunities to continue expanding the kingdom
 - He is saying that in view of what they have done, their deeds, he has placed the door ahead of them and, despite all the bluster and apparent power, Fallen Babylon in all its forms cannot close it.
 - Little Strength
 - Part of the encouraging nature of the open door is that the Philadelphia church was apparently made up of the lower rungs of society.
 - They don't have clout in the world's eyes.
 - They hold no positions of authority.
 - God works some of his mightiest miracles in our weakness.
 - Kept my word and not denied my name
 - This church has kept to the truth, the word
 - This church has not denied the name/nature of Jesus, they are holy
 - In a sense they are like Jesus the holy and true One
 - Acknowledged by the Synagogue of Satan as loved by God
 - The synagogue of Satan appears as it did in Smyrna
 - Both of the Focused churches are persecuted by Jews who, seeking to preserve their position of privilege, take Christians to the authorities to ensure they are not accused of proselytizing.
 - They endure patiently
 - They have not allowed the great tribulations to turn them away
 - They have shared and endured patiently with John
 - This is the Church of Faithful determination - They, themselves are weak, but they serve the Almighty who can change the world.

Questions for discussion:

- What open doors has Jesus set before you?
- Do we avoid speaking or living our faith to avoid the consequences attached to "proselytizing" in our world?



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- 3:10b - 11 - Reminders to Stay Focused
 - I will keep you from the hour of trial (or testing)
 - When the truth is revealed each person's life is tested against it.
 - Those who live on the earth in the book represent those who do not have a relationship with Jesus. When the false Babylon way of living is tested it will be exposed and found wanting.
 - The destruction will be the result for those that are of Fallen Babylon, but the saints of Philadelphia will remain standing in holiness and truth unscathed by the testing.
 - I am coming soon
 - Jesus is again encouraging the church to hold out. His assistance is not far off.
 - This supports John's purpose in writing that Christians would live boldly as citizens of the New Jerusalem in a Fallen Babylon world.
 - Christians know that, no matter how dark it may seem in a Fallen Babylon world as described in chapters 4 - 20, the story ends in chapters 21 and 22's glorious victory and dwelling with God for all eternity.
 - Hold on to what you have so no one takes your crown
 - Stay faithful to the relationship you have with Jesus and he will give a crowning reward
 - Paul talks about receiving a crown of righteousness 2 Tim 4:8
 - James talks about a crown of life James 1:12
 - Peter talks about an unfading crown of glory 1 Peter 5:4
 - Brought together, the crown is a symbol of being restored to perfect wholeness: The righteousness and life to be found only in Christ and the glory which is a reflection of the nature of God, himself, in the Christian. One who receives the crown of glory is restored to the fullness of the image of God placed within them.

Questions for discussion:

- 3:12 - 13 - Picture the future - "To him who is conquering..."
 - I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God
 - This is not the Jerusalem Temple which was a shadow of things to come Heb 8:5
 - This is the Temple as seen in CH 21
 - Pillars are integral to the structure of a building. It stands tall, firmly grounded and immovable. Jesus is making a statement about their relational position. They are in him continually.



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- I will write on him
 - The name of God - They are fully restored to the nature of God, i.e. exactly who God created them to be in all its perfection.
 - The name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem
 - Note that New Jerusalem **IS** coming down, not **will** come down.
 - The restoration of the kingdom is an ongoing reality.
 - This is an indication of citizenship. e.g. We are Americans, citizens of America, because the name/nature of America identifies who we are. These could be called New Jerusalemites because the name/nature of the New Jerusalem identifies who they are.
 - My own new name
 - The 144k of CH 14 are those with the name of the Lamb and the Father on their foreheads
 - The forehead was regarded as the seat of perception. These are the ones who have a God-authored worldview that drives who they are.
 - This is a redeemed and priestly group that is different from the Fallen Babylon world around them.
- **Summary discussion**
 - What would it mean to be a pillar in the Temple of my God?
 - How is the New Jerusalem both a right now and future reality?
 - Research by the Barna group suggests that only 9% of Born-again evangelicals hold a biblical worldview. What does Jesus' name written on the forehead, a biblical worldview look like in action?
 - How should it inform our outreach, personally, locally, and globally?
 - How should it inform our media habits?
 - How should it inform our beliefs about science or governance or social issues, like homosexuality?
- **Peering Deeper**
 - Should Christians expect persecution if they are carrying out their relationship with Jesus properly? What biblical evidence can you find?
 - Conduct a study of the names used of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in Scripture. What do these names say about his nature?
 - Examine the book of Revelation for indicators of the deity of Jesus. What does the prevalence of these types of images, titles, and statements say about Jesus' authority over the church and the lives of its members?