

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS TO  
THE CHURCH OF PHILADEPHIA  
REVELATION 3:7-13

Dr. Michael D. Wedman

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BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Crossing the Hermeneutical Bridges

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Reputation

- Youngest of all seven cities
- Founded in 140 B.C. by colonists from Pergamum under the reign of Attalus II
- “One who loves his brother”  
– *Attalus and Eumenes*

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## Reputation

- Story of King Xerxes
  - *On his way to invade Europe and found shelter under a great plane tree*
  - *Left costly gifts on the tree*
  - *Left a bodyguard to care for the tree*

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## Reputation

- AD 17 – destroyed by the same earthquake that destroyed Sardis
- Tremors continued on for years
  - *Described as a city full of earthquakes*

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## Reputation

- Rebuilt by Tiberius
  - *Money and remittance of taxes for 5yrs*
- Renamed their city, “Neocaesarea”
- Renamed again to “Flavia” in honor of Emperor Vespasian whose family name was “Flavia”

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## Reputation

- During the rise of Mohammed and the Turks, only city that did not fall.
- Known as the “last bastion of Christianity”
- Later fell to the Turks in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

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## Setting

- 28 miles south of Sardis
- Stood at the border of 3 countries
  - *Myasia, Lydia, Phrygia*
- Gateway to the East – highway from Europe to the East

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## Setting

- Located on the great plain, “Katakekaumene” – “burned land”
- A volcanic plain with lava beds and the ashes of extinct volcanoes

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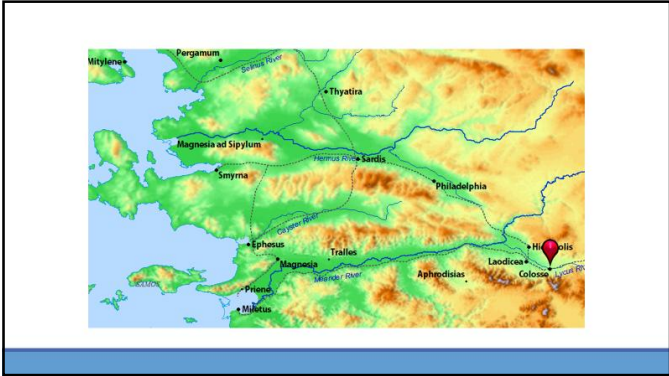
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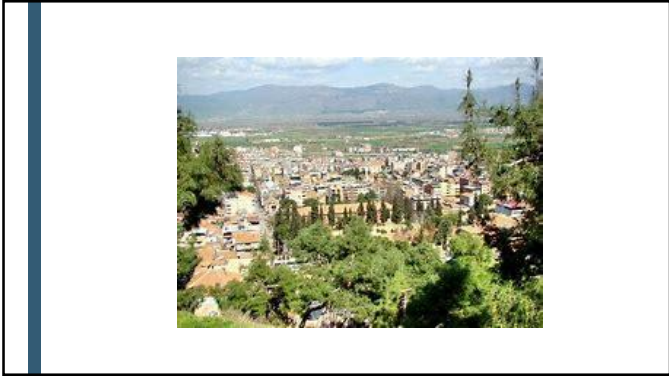
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## Economy

- On a very fertile plain due to volcanoes
- Center of a grape growing industry
  - *World famous producers of wine*

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## Economy

- There were many hot springs believed to be medicinal
  - *Attracted many who would bathe in the springs in search of health*
  - *Still a place of hot springs and tourists*

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## Economy

- Became rich because of its position on the highway from Europe to the East
- It was a difficult place to live because of the earthquakes and tremors
  - *Most lived outside of the city and commuted in*
  - *Those who stayed were considered mad*

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## Politics

- Its purpose was to bring Greek culture to the surrounding areas
  - *Particularly Lydia and Phrygia*
- It was a missionary city of Greek culture to the Barbarians

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## Politics

- They were highly successful
  - *The Lydians soon lost their own culture and language and even willingly became part of the Roman Empire*
  - *The Phrygians refused Hellenization*

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## Religion

- Was often called, "little Athens" because of its many gods and temples
- Dionysius was their main god
  - *god of grapes*
- There was a synagogue for the large Jewish population

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## Religion

- A custom in Philadelphia:
  - *A pillar in the temple of the gods with their name on it was erected for prominent and noble people who left large sums of money to the state or temple*

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## Christianity

- A strong and faithful church
- Some persecution which came mostly from the Jews

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## Today

- The church remains
- Modern city of Alasheher
  - *Main industry is licorice production*

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## The Message of Jesus

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## Person of Jesus

- Holy – term used only for God
  - Called “the Holy One of God” Jn 6:69
- True – “the genuine One” or “real One”
  - The Jews claimed that Jesus was a liar and not the Messiah
  - Jesus is the true God, not all the “gods” of Philadelphia

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## Person of Jesus

- Holds the key of David – His absolute authority for entrance into the Messianic Kingdom
- Rev 1:18
- See Isa 22:15-25

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## Person of Jesus

- Holds the key of David
  - *What He opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open*
  - *He has ultimate authority as to what will be and what will not be*

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## Praise from Jesus

- I know your deeds – complete and good
- Kept His word and not denied His name
  - *Not given in to persecution or false teaching*
- They have an open door from Jesus that cannot be shut

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## Praise from Jesus

- Question: What is the open door?
- Answer: The missionary ventures to promote and proclaim the gospel
  - *Purpose of Philadelphia was to Hellenize*
  - *Purpose of the church is to evangelize*

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## Encouragement from Jesus

- Their persecutors will fall at the feet of the church and proclaim that Jesus is the truth and Christians are right
- He will keep them from the trial that is coming upon the whole earth

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## Encouragement from Jesus

- Question: what does this mean? To be kept from the trial that is coming?
- We are clearly speaking about the Great Tribulation
- See Jn 17:15; Rev 6:9-11

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## Promise from Jesus

- I am coming soon
- To those who overcome the world will become a pillar in the temple of God  
– *Never will he/she leave God's presence*

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### Promise from Jesus

- Will be marked with the name of God
- Will be marked with the name of the city of God
- Will be marked with the new name of Jesus
- Rev 7:3; 14:1

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### Rebuke from Jesus

- None!
- Just like Smyrna

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### Summary/conclusion

- A small church who are relying on the power and authority of Christ to promote and proclaim the gospel of Christ to those around them.
- They are not slacking off, backing away, nor ignoring the commands of Christ to love others in action and in word.

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