

I Am Coming Quickly

One Wednesday morning a Christian woman left her home and headed for the Woman's Bible Study at Beth Sar Shalom - a mission to the Jews. She realized that this morning was not going to be a happy one. She finally arrived at the mission, parked her car, stopped the engine, and picked up her Bible. She had been wondering if she was really a Christian. As she walked into the mission, she did not see anyone in the office. This was not normal and so she wondered where the secretary was. When she entered the large room where the Bible study usually was held, she only saw empty seats. Bibles were open on the tables, coats were hanging over the chairs, pencils and pens were left, and coffee cups were partially filled. But no one was present. She screamed in panic believing that Jesus had come and had left her behind. The women came running from the back door and soon learned that she had been worried that perhaps she was not a Christian and was going to hell. In this study, we will get our first glimpse in Revelation as to how Jesus will return.

OPEN DOOR. The church in Philadelphia was an unusual church among the seven churches. It is one of two churches about which God had only good things to say. The other church was Smyrna. The remaining five churches all received some negative comments. This church had a passion for reaching those who did not believe in Jesus. As a result they were persecuted but it did not stop them because they loved Jesus. So God says to them,

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this I know your deeds. Behold, I

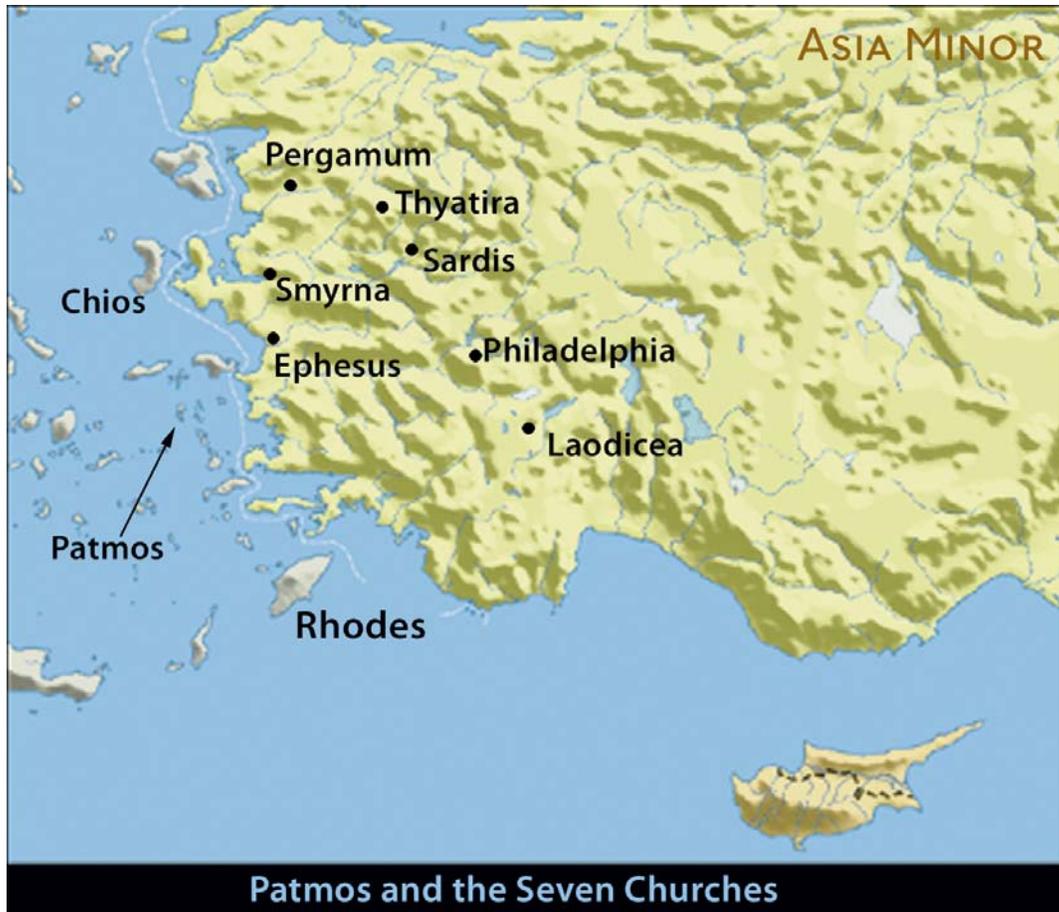
have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. (NASB) Rev. 3:7-8

As a result God opened a door of opportunity for them. We will find in the next verse that the open door is an opportunity to tell others about Jesus Christ. They had been faithful

to Him. They were not powerful in the sense of political influence or financial wealth, but they were devoted. That was all the power they needed. They held to the teaching of scripture and did not deny Jesus even under persecution. They were committed to Him.



Acropolis in Ancient Philadelphia



There have always been two types of Christians. Those who seriously follow Him and those who do not. Those who dedicate themselves to God and those who give a part of themselves. In the book of Ecclesiastes we are reminded that this is the view of our world,

Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? (NASB) Eccl. 7:16

We read in the gospels that Jesus told a rich man to give away everything that he owned. But the man was not willing to give all of himself to God. Some people today do not want to be “overly righteous” because that would spoil their fun. “Why should you ruin yourself?” Why should we witness for Jesus? We sometimes forget that God demands that Christians serve Him as a slave serves a Master.

And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? (NASB) Luke 6:46

These Christians served Jesus with a passion in their heart. So God opened doors of opportunity for them. This is real church growth. God responds to the hearts of His children who are committed to Him by opening doors of ministry.

In the city of Los Angeles (in the United States) there was a church called the “Church of the Open Door.” The church was famous for its pastors. They were men such as Dr. R. A. Torrey, Dr. Louis T. Talbot, and Dr. J. Vernon McGee. This church had a huge red, neon sign on top of the thirteenth floor which read, “Jesus Saves.” The doors of the church were always open throughout the day to anyone who wanted to come in and pray to God. The church was a beacon in the United States and throughout the world since it supported many missionaries. The church at Philadelphia was like the Church of the Open Door. God opened doors of ministry for both churches.

PHILADELPHIA. The church at Philadelphia was located in a city now called Alasehir which means “the city of God.” It is located in modern day Turkey. Philadelphia was once

part of the Lydian Empire and was located about 125-150 miles (202 - 241 km) from the coast and about 28 miles (45 km) southeast of Sardis. The city was founded by Attalus II Philadelphus (159-183 B.C.). It was once a fortress city. Later in A.D. 70-79 the city was renamed Neocaesrea. This made the citizens unhappy. Later in this passage we will see that this was significant. The church was active and spiritually great. It was eventually destroyed by the Turks in A.D. 1392.

There are only a few ruins left where the city once existed. A field is all that remains of a once proud acropolis. The ruins of a theater have been discovered among the rubble and only two columns of a very large ancient church remain. Are these the columns of the ancient church referred to in Revelation? If so, God has left a testimony about them with us.

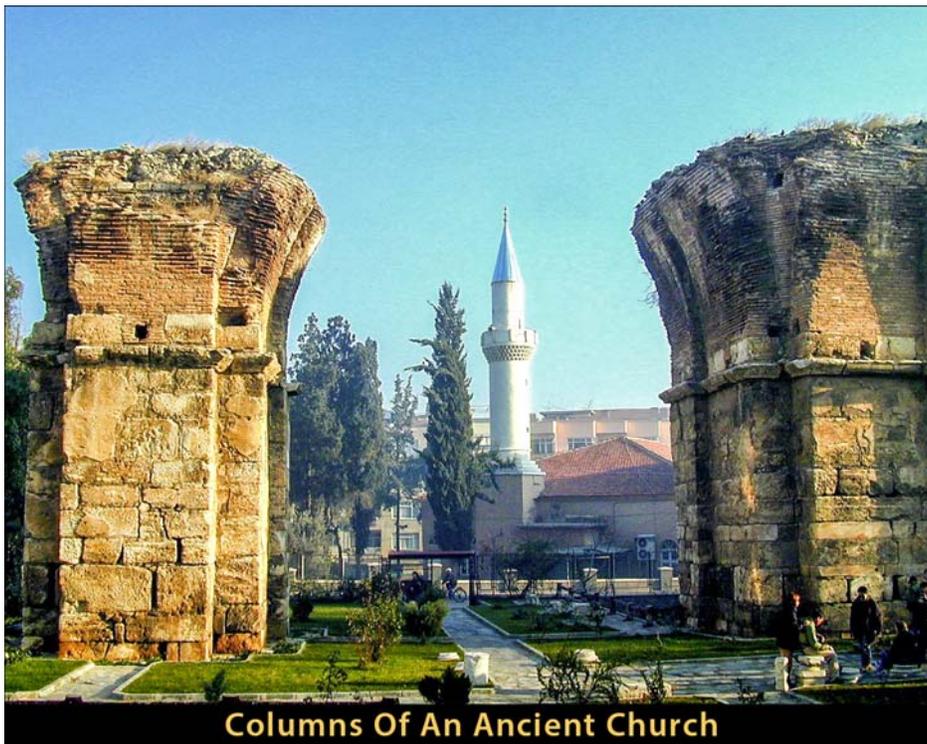
S U C C E S S .
Because these Christians were committed to Him, He promised that many Jews in the city of Philadelphia would want Jesus to forgive their sins. Their desire was not church growth but saved souls.

Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie - behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. (NASB) Rev. 3:9

These Jews would come to understand that these Christians were correct. They finally discovered that these Christians were not offensive to God but that He loved them.

God did not promise an end to their suffering but only that many souls would come to Jesus. Were these followers of Jesus encouraged? I think they were because He gave them a new promise that they would not suffer more pain and hardship from the future tribulation that is to come.

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. (NASB) Rev. 3:10



This is the Tribulation Period that Jesus referred to in the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And

unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. (NASB) Matt. 24:20-22

The prophet Daniel has already taught us that this coming period of suffering is God's judgment on a sinful world. God is simply promising these Christians that they will not go through it. Like many other early Christians, they were apparently expecting the Tribulation to come soon.

I COME QUICKLY. These words that we have been reading from the book of Revelation were written by Jesus. How do we know? Look at the next verse.

I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown. (NASB) Rev. 3:11

And He said to the disciples, "The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it." (NASB) Luke 17:22

This is Jesus. What a joy it must have been to see these words from their Savior. But why does He say that He is coming quickly? In order to understand this comment, we need to understand that the Greek word used for "quickly" does not mean immediately. There are actually a number of Greek

He tells them that they will not be alive when He returns. They will not see His Second Coming. He told this to all of His disciples including the apostle John who is writing the book of Revelation. This is an important point. It is important to understand that some early Christians misunder-

<i>Meaning of "Quickly"</i>	
Greek Word	Meaning
μεταξυ	- point in time after another point in time
ευθυς	- point in time immediately after another point in time
ταχιστα	- a point in time after another point in time with emphasis on as briefly as possible
αυριον	- a point in time after another point in time with emphasis on imminence
ταχυ	- a point in time after another point in time with emphasis on suddenness
αιφθιδιος	- extremely short period of time
οξυς	- very short period of time
ταξος	- a very brief period of time
μελλω	- a point of time in the future

words that can have the idea of quickly. But the Greek word that is used here is *taxchu*. It has the idea that something will occur suddenly at some time in the future but not immediately. Jesus is telling them that He comes suddenly and not immediately. He is telling them to not focus on how soon He comes; but that when He comes, He comes fast. There will be no warning to get ready. Every man and woman must be ready when He comes.

The gospel of Luke records an important statement that Jesus made to His disciples about His Second Coming and the future kingdom.

stood that Jesus did not promise to come while they were alive. He warned them and all of us that when He comes, He comes suddenly. He wants us to always be faithful.

MORE PROMISES. Jesus finishes His comments with more promises.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (NASB) Rev. 3:12-13

It was a custom in ancient times to give honor to a person by inscribing their name on a column in one of the ancient temples. So Jesus promises to honor them for their commitment to Him “in the temple of My God.” We will discover more about this temple later in



Revelation. Did you know that God will honor us for faithfulness and devotion?

Jesus also promises them two new names. This is symbolic of His ownership of them. Remember that the city of Philadelphia had been renamed to Neocaesarea. The citizens did not like that. So God uses something that they are familiar with from their past to make a point. He wants them. He loves them. He loves His faithful Ones in the city of love.

CONCLUSION. As the woman screamed at the empty Bible study, these Christians were looking for Jesus to come. Only

they had no doubt that they were real Christians. They were giving their life for their God. He had lived among them only seventy years earlier. These men and women were ready to die for Him - to give their lives for Him.

When Cortez landed at Vera Cruz in 1519 he

landed with 700 men. His goal was to conquer Mexico and find gold. In order to ensure the commitment of his men, he ordered his fleet of eleven ships to be destroyed in the Gulf of Mexico. With no means of retreat and facing survival in a new land, he knew his men would now be committed. Jesus does not burn the ships in our life. But like Cortez He wants our complete devotion. Is Jesus all that you want in life? Have you burned your own ships?