

Daniel and Revelation Series

Sermon 8

Philadelphia

(Only Jesus Has the Key)

Text: [Rev 3: 7-13](#)

In our last sermon on Revelation we looked at Sardis, the church that became dead when it lost its belief in the power of God. This church existed during the age of rationalism, the belief that natural laws were responsible for the existence of the earth and the life on it. . But Sardis is given something more specific. *“I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”*

Now we come to a most interesting church. The Church of brotherly love. Philadelphia! Let’s read [3:7-13](#).

Identification: 1:18. David? Or death and Hades? What’s the connection? An echo is found in [Isaiah 22:20-22](#). The key to Jerusalem (David’s house). Eliakim is a type of Christ; note the robe and the sash seen also in [Rev 1:13](#). While Eliakim had the key to the earthly Jerusalem, (those given entry were safe – those refused entry would be killed by the enemy). Christ has the key to the heavenly Jerusalem. In other words He decides who enters and who does not. To enter is life, to be

refused entry is death. So we see that the key of David is the key to life or death, and that the two verses are in harmony. Note the open door that no one can shut because only Jesus has the key.

Commendation: v8b No strength, but have not denied my name. With Jesus it is the weak that are strong and the strong that are weak. Those who looked down on them will one day fall at their feet and acknowledge that Jesus loved them.

Rebuke: None.

Admonition: Hold on. No once saved always saved here.

Warning: None.

Promise:

- a. v 10. keep from hour of trial,
- b. v 11. I am coming soon,
- c. v 12. A pillar in the temple
- d. v 12. Jesus' new name

Why was this weak little church such a favourite of God? It was a special time in the history of the Christian church. It was the era of evangelism. It was the time of missionary societies, Bible Societies, revival meetings, camp meetings, temperance awareness and health reform. But above all, it was the time of the Advent Awakening. It was during this time that preachers all over America and Europe began to declare to the world that Jesus was coming back soon. William Miller, Joseph

Wolfe, and others all at the same time and without reference to each other began preaching that Christ was soon to return.

The traditional understanding among Christians was that there would be 1000 years of peace before Christ returned. This view is still very popular among Christians today. It is behind the popular theory of Dispensationalism, which teaches that Christ will secretly rapture away the righteous prior to a time of great tribulation. This view is known as postmillennialism – meaning that Christ returns after the millennium.

But during the early 19th century – the Philadelphian age, people began carefully to study the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, and came to the conclusion that Christ was to return before the 1000 years. This was known as Premillennialism. They were heartened in this understanding by the passage in Daniel, in which the angel tells Daniel to seal up the book until the time of the end, because many would run to and fro and knowledge would be increased. This is why the Church in Philadelphia was such a special church in God's sight.

We should not think these events should go unchallenged by the enemy. Remember. For every truth, the enemy has a malicious counterpart. The same was true of this period of evangelistic zeal. Let's look at some interesting events and dates that well demonstrate the Great Controversy in progress during these days.

I mentioned in my message on Sardis, that Geology played an important part in turning people's minds away from the power of God. Now I want to show you something very interesting:

In the late 18th Century a man by name of James Hutton observed that rivers had the action of picking up, carrying and depositing silt. Every year rivers pick up millions of tons of silt and deposit them further downstream. Over long periods of time this silting results in the change of shape of rivers

In the year 1795, Hutton established what he called, "The Theory of the Earth". He stated, "*We find no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end*". In other words, this silting process must have been continuing for vast ages of time – far longer than the Bible gave for the age of the earth. Thus was born the idea that God did not actually create the world in six days.

This challenged the thinking of many theologians of the day. Remember, a hundred years before, someone suggesting this would have been burnt as a heretic. In 1804, a theologian by the name of Thomas Chalmers suggested that the Creation story in the Bible should not be taken literally; maybe, he said, God did not create from nothing, and that the matter was already in existence. He suggested a long period of time between the first two verses of Genesis.

Then around 1831 Charles Lyell, who had researched Hutton's work, established what became known as the

Principle of Uniformity. His three-volume works, the Principles of Geology, became standard textbooks for geologists. Note the date, 1831.

Eleven years later, in 1844, Charles Darwin, wrote his famous book, *On the Origin of Species*, in which he put forward the ideas of natural selection and survival of the fittest.

These ideas from geology and natural science were the basis for the theory of evolution. Darwin's book was published in 1859 and it created fierce controversy. The church was up in arms. Science and religion clashed head on.

An Anglican Bishop by the name of Samuel Wilberforce challenged well-known scientist Thomas Huxley to a debate over the issue of the origins of the earth. The debate took place in 1860 – remember the date. The bishop argued that God created all the individual species and sub-species in one day. Huxley used Darwin's theory to argue that life had evolved over vast periods of time with weaker species dying out and stronger ones surviving.

The result was a total humiliation for the church, and from that time onwards, people began to doubt the Biblical account of creation.

Thus a counterfeit system of origins was developed that ran in direct opposition to the Word of God. But God

was quietly working too. Let's take those dates: 1795, 1804, 1833, 1844, and 1860.

(Start slide show)

In 1798 the 1260 days of Daniel 7:25 came to an end bringing about the beginning of the Time of the End. Thus, just as the Bible was letting us know the end times were upon us, we were being told that there is no beginning and no end.

In the early 1800's the Bible Societies and great missionary societies were formed and great men and women of God travelled to the far reaches of the earth with the Gospel. It was exactly at this time that the established church began to sow doubts in the minds of the people regarding the Creatorship of God. No wonder the Three Angels' Messages include the significant words: *Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.* Rev 14:7

While Charles Lyell was publishing his three volume series on the Principles of Geology, and teaching that all the processes of change in the earth occur at a uniform rate, God was telling a Baptist farmer called William Miller and others to go out and tell the world that Judgment was at hand, and that soon Jesus would return.

The date these independent preachers all predicted for Christ's return was 1844. The very year that Charles Darwin was sailing on his famous voyage that resulted in the theory of evolution.

In the year that saw the great debate between Wilberforce and Huxley, 1860, the year that saw the adherents of special Creation made to look fools in the eyes of the “enlightened” world, a new church was born. In 1860 in Michigan, a group of humble God-fearing men and women took an action to give their infant church a name of great significance. They named it the *Seventh-day Adventist Church*. The name was significant because it pointed in two directions, *Seventh-day* pointed back to the beginning, the Creation, and *Adventist* pointed forward to the end, the day when Christ shall return in all His glory.

Hutton said, “*We find no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end*”. And God responded by establishing a movement that was to go around the entire earth proclaiming there *was* a beginning, and there *will be* an end.

Thus the time of the Philadelphian church was from the beginning of the Time of the End – around 1798 to the time of the birth of the movement that would go out and preach to the world the glorious Good News that the King is Coming!

There are so many lessons for us in this passage that I need another sermon to share them. However, they are all overshadowed by this one great lesson; the lesson that you and I are a part of that movement.

That is why the church at Philadelphia was so special to God; it was the church that God appointed to prepare the world for His return. A church with no strength. Founded by a small group of teenagers, one of whom was just a seventeen-year old girl with only three years of formal education.

But before them was placed an open door, and through it they went proclaiming the great message of the Three Angels of Revelation 14. *“Fear God and give glory to Him, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.”*

Now that movement has grown to over 13 million people in nearly 200 countries. From the humble peasant to the nation’s top leaders, men and women have burning in their hearts the hope of the coming of the Lord. Who...

*... believe the time is here,
When the nations far and near
Shall proclaim and shout and sing,
Hallelujah! Christ is King.*

That is the great honour and privilege
Let us close our worship this morning by singing that
great song of hope in the Advent promise.