

Series: Becoming the Church at Philadelphia

Pursuing a Bridal Relationship

Intro

1. In this message and the next which will be the last in the series, the last two messages of the five (this message and next week) on Becoming the Church at Philadelphia, we want to highlight 10 life pursuits taken from the description of this church that characterize this church as a picture of the bride made ready at the end of the age.
2. As a reminder, Philadelphia is a beautiful picture of the corporate bride made ready at the end of the age.
3. By way of a brief review, in the first message I provided evidence why the church at Philadelphia depicts the corporate bride made ready at the end of the age.
4. In the second and third message, I spoke about the eternal destiny of the bride made ready and listed several eternal promises to which the bride is promised.
5. Therefore, this church and the life pursuits highlighted by this church become crucial issues that those really desiring to become the bride made ready must pursue with great abandonment.
6. So, let's get started. We will walk through the church starting at the beginning and as we go through it somewhat from beginning to end.
7. Let's begin by reading Jesus' message to Philadelphia:

Rev 3:7-13

7 "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:

8 '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. 9 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie

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— I will make them come and bow down at your feet and make them know that I have loved you. 10 '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 on the earth. 11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 '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 on 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. 13 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

I. Pursue becoming and help build the global corporate bridal church.

1. To the church at Philadelphia
 - a. Jesus calls the messenger to Philadelphia to write to the corporate body worshiping in the city of Philadelphia.
 - b. Jesus' messages to the seven churches are plural in nature implying that they refer to the corporate body of all seven churches and the corporate church throughout the ancient world and the global church throughout history.
2. The Greek word for church is *ekklēsia* and is derived from two Greek words: *ek* meaning "out of" and *kaleō* meaning "to call".
 - a. So it literally means: "The called-out ones" or "assembly of those called out."
 - b. In classical Greek it refers to a gathering of citizens in a city-state for deliberation or official business.
 - c. The word denotes an assembly with purpose and identity.

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3. It is important to note that Jesus did not speak to the saints at Philadelphia or the bondservants at Philadelphia. He spoke to the church, that is, the called out assembly of believers there. This suggests the corporate nature of the message.
4. The purpose and identity of the church (not a scattered group of believers) at Philadelphia is to become a corporate body of believers whose purpose and identity is to become part of the corporate bride made ready.
 - a. In the context of the bride, Paul wrote: “that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27).
5. Jesus wants a corporate people of living stones who make themselves ready as a bride. He wants believers to become a living stone; join in the building of a house of living stones at RLC; and participate in building a larger global house of living stones.
6. You have been called out for this purpose. So, the first challenge to each of us is to join the journey toward bridal readiness with purpose and intentionality. Not in lukewarmness or passivity, but with a fervent heart to become a citizen in the new Jerusalem.

II. Love Christ and One Another

1. The name of the church also speaks of God’s message to the church at Philadelphia.
2. The names of the cities in which the seven churches dwell represent challenges or characteristics or promises of the message Jesus wants to speak to each church. They are not random; they have meaning.
3. For example:
 - a. Smyrna:
 - i. The word Smyrna is rooted in the Greek word *mýrrha*, which is the basis for the English word “myrrh”.
 - ii. Myrrh was a burial spice which was bitter to the taste but had a sweet aroma.

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- iii. Myrrh's bitter yet fragrant nature aligns with Jesus' message to Smyrna: *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Rev. 2:10). The church faced persecution, imprisonment, and potential martyrdom.
- iv. Their suffering (bitterness) would produce a fragrant testimony before God, much like crushed myrrh releases its fragrance.
- b. Laodicea
 - i. Laodicea come from the Greek word *Laodikeia* which has its origin in two Greek words *laos* which means "people" and *dike* which means "justice," "judgment," or "rule".
 - ii. The meaning of the word as it relates to the church at Laodicea is the rule of the people. Laodicea was a church that judged themselves to be in need of nothing and chose to rule themselves rather than allow Christ to rule them.
 - iii. This led to lukewarmness
- c. Ephesus
 - i. The most common meaning of the word Ephesus is "desirable".
 - ii. The city of Ephesus was a very desirable city to the Romans. It was the capital of Roman Asia Minor and a major port city. The Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World was there. It was a center of wealth, commerce, and cultural influence.
 - iii. The city's name "desirable" highlights church's loss of what is truly desirable: love for Christ.
 - iv. Despite their doctrinal faithfulness and diligent service, they had lost their passion, intimacy, and love for Jesus.
 - v. They lived in a "desirable" city, but Jesus desired their hearts above all else. To overcome, they needed to rekindle their desire for Jesus, aligning with their name.
- 4. Philadelphia was in stark contrast to the church at Ephesus. They were a church who loved.

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5. The Greek word for Philadelphia is derived from two Greek words, *philos* meaning love and *adelphos* meaning brother. Thus, the meaning brotherly love. *Philos* carries the meaning of being fond of someone or something; to have affection for; to love with the love of emotion and friendship; and to delight in and long for.
6. Founded around 189–138 BC by King Eumenes II of Pergamum, named by his brother Attalus II. Philadelphus, known for his loyalty to his brother (hence “brotherly love”). Strategically located on trade routes, it served as a gateway for the spread of Greek culture into Phrygia and Lydia.
7. The name “Philadelphia” reflects: Their faithful, enduring love for Christ, seen in their obedience and faithfulness and their love for one another as a spiritual family in the midst of trials.
8. With Philadelphia meaning a lot more than merely the name assigned to the church there, it implies that the bride made ready above all else is to love Christ, to love others in the church there as a community of friends, and to love the people outside the church.
9. Of course, we know that the great commandment of Christ is to love God with all their heart and to love others as oneself.

Matt 22:36-40: "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

10. With Christ's rebuke of Ephesus being Jesus first message to the church and it being that they lost their desire for the man Christ even though they remained faithful to Him in doctrine and purpose, it adds emphasis to the message to Philadelphia is to love Christ with passion and affection and to desire Him.
11. And from this type of love relationship with Christ, to also love others.
12. Jesus said this is the most important thing and that all other commandments are encompassed in

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13. So, the challenge to each of us is to love God—not only in word and deed—although that is essential to bridal readiness. For Ephesus did that. The challenge is also to love Christ in desire for Him and to have a vibrant relationship with Him.

Ps 16:11: You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

14. And from a foundation of loving Christ, love the church community as true brothers and sisters and express love for the community.

III. Make a Sincere Commitment to Set Apart Your Life for Christ.

Rev 3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy

1. As you see, the above verse pertains to Christ who is holy not the church at Philadelphia. So, we need to look at how in these messages, the character traits highlighted of Christ in each of the seven messages are not random but have meaning to the specific church where they are mentioned.
2. For example:
 - a. Ephesus is the first of the seven churches listed. Jesus said about Himself to Ephesus: *"The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:"*
 - i. He is saying that He has clear knowledge of each of the seven churches and what their condition is
 - ii. The seven stars are the messengers to the seven churches and by implication the messages to the seven churches. Holding them in his right hand is authority over these churches. He is saying He has authority over the churches to deal with them as He states through the messengers
 - b. To Smyrna, He wrote: *Rev 2:8: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:*
 - i. Smyrna faced severe testing and possible martyrdom.

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ii. He was encouraging them as to what He had gone through and that He came to life after death and that they would too.

c. Others have similar applications.

3. To Philadelphia, Jesus said:

Rev 3:7: "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:

1. The word "holy" means among other meanings to be set apart for God; that is, to be exclusively His or to be fully devoted to God.
2. In biblical days, the idea of betrothal referred to a man "taking of a woman". Thus, the betrothal ceremony was a time for a man "to take" a woman to be his wife. The term *mekudeshet* was employed in the betrothal ceremony suggesting that at the time of the betrothal ceremony, the bride from that point forward was consecrated to the groom.
3. As such, the groom would recite, "Behold, you are *mekudeshet* [consecrated] unto me", signifying that the bride was being set apart for the groom. This suggests that the bride was purchased by the groom and was now set apart for him and him alone.
4. In essence, He who is holy, that is, set apart from sin, worldliness and evil is calling His bride to be holy as He is holy.
5. This leads to the challenge for us to make a serious commitment to set our life apart fully for Christ and His purposes for us. This will be a commitment that will have lifelong impact upon our life. We have been purchased by Him; let us surrender to Him.

IV. Become truly genuine in your walk with Christ.

1. Jesus said the He is also "true".
2. The Greek word for "true" is *alethinós*. It means to be true in the sense of real, ideal, genuine as opposed to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, or pretended

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3. It is interesting that the message to Philadelphia follows immediately after the message to Sardis to whom Jesus said that *you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead*.
4. The call to the church at Philadelphia is to be genuine in your walk with Christ and not hypocritical.
5. We are living in a season in which God is judging hypocrisy in the church. Superstar pastors are being exposed for sexual sin and other sins as well.
6. The message to Philadelphia is that the bride will not be comprised of superstars with great power, but with genuine believers who might not have much power at all.
7. But they are real. Their inward life is the same as the image they exhibit.
8. The exhortation to each of us is to live a genuine life in Christ. We are not talking about sinless perfection but a lifestyle in which who we really are agrees with who we profess to be.