

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH WILL WE BE?

Worthy!

TEXT: Rev. 3:7-13

IS HE WORTHY?

HE IS!

Who is He Who is worthy? The one to Whom the elders in Heaven will sing.

Revelation 5:9 NKJV

... "You are worthy ...; For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation
And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth."

Who is He Who is worthy? The one to Whom 10,000 times 10,000 angels will sing.

Revelation 5:12 NKJV

... "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Who is He Who is worthy? The one to Whom every creature in heaven and earth will sing.

Revelation 5:13 NKJV

... "Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

And the Worthy Lamb of God is the Risen Christ Who has sent messages of encouragement, challenge, rebuke, warning, and promise to His churches.

Do you know, dear brother, dear sister, that if the Lord Jesus had only meant these messages to be for the seven local churches of Asia Minor, He would not have caused them to be preserved across the centuries as a portion of His Word.

But the Lord intends these messages for churches today. He intends these messages for St. Andrew Baptist Church. The Lord wants us to ask and answer WHAT KIND OF CHURCH WILL WE BE?

And I ask you, not rhetorically or just for your consideration, I am asking this for an answer. I want to hear the answer from each and every one of you in this room.

Is Jesus worthy of our striving to be the kind of church Jesus wants us to be?

HE IS!

Then please give to me your utmost attention, not for my sake, for Jesus' sake, and for the sake of St. Andrew Baptist becoming fully the kind of church Jesus wants us to be.

We have read and considered the messages of our Savior to the first five of the seven churches. This morning we will read the message to the sixth, the church at Philadelphia. This message has special significance, because **the church at Philadelphia was the kind of church Jesus wants the church to be.**

Unlike the other messages, the Lord's message to Philadelphia contains no rebuke, no warnings, no threats. It only commends and promises.

What was the church at Philadelphia like to receive such praise from the Master?

Let's read with great care the message of the Lord Jesus to this model church.

Revelation 3:7-13 NKJV 7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "*He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens*": 8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 *I will write on him My new name.*

13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

How can we describe the characteristics of this church the Lord praised so highly?

- **THEY EXALTED THE RISEN LORD.**
- **THEY MINISTERED IN HIS NAME.**
- **THEY REACHED OUT TO THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL.**
- **THEY ALL DID IT TOGETHER.**

Let me show you how I get this from Christ's message to Philadelphia.

- **THEY EXALTED THE RISEN LORD.**

Jesus begins His message saying

Revelation 3:7 NKJV "...These things says **He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David,** He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

The church at Philadelphia believed these truths concerning Who Jesus is. They acknowledged them, and let these truths govern their lives.

How do we know? Because in the other messages the Risen Christ declares who He is and then expresses a rebuke that is connected to the quality He declared and threatens them in a way also tied to Jesus' description of Himself.

Look –

Revelation 2:12–16 NKJV

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, '**These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ...**

14 **But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ...**

16 **Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.**

We find the same pattern repeated in many of the other messages, but not with Philadelphia.

- Jesus says He is holy, but He does not rebuke them for offending His holiness.
- He says He is true, but He makes no mention of them not being true also.
- He identifies as Messiah who has the key of David that unlocks all of heaven's blessings, but does not criticize them at all. In fact He tells them no one can shut the door of Heaven's blessings to them, and the Lord names many of those blessings they will receive.

My friend, the church at Philadelphia exalted Christ! And ...

- **THEY MINISTERED IN HIS NAME.**

Revelation 3:8 NKJV "I know **your works.** ..."

This is a word that means your deeds, especially your good deeds.

Most of the seven churches are commended for their works, but immediately after the commendation the Lord Jesus issues a criticism or rebuke.

Not so for Philadelphia. As the Lord Jesus when He walked upon the earth ministered to the needs of people, so also the Christians in Philadelphia ministered to the needs of people in their city.

And ...

- **THEY REACHED OUT TO THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL.**

Revelation 3:8 NKJV “I know your works. See, **I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it**; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

- **Philadelphia was built as a missionary city to spread Greek influence.**
- **The church at Philadelphia was very specially positioned to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the frontiers of Phrygia.**
 - The opportunity came from Him Who has the key of David.
 1. The one with the right and power to open or close admission to the King’s house.
 2. The one who is the exclusive way to the Father.
 - He, Jesus Himself, opened the door of missionary opportunity to the church of Philadelphia.
- **The church at Philadelphia seized the opportunity and was faithful to the task.**
 - They had little earthly strength, but
 - **They kept the Word of Jesus.** – Very likely a direct reference to the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19–20 NKJV 19 **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

- **They did not deny the Lord’s name.** – Also likely a reference to Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:8 NKJV But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses to Me** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

A person who is a witness to Jesus must speak the name and cannot deny the name of the Lord!

- Of all seven of the churches of the Revelation, Philadelphia was by far the most mission minded.
- **The church at Philadelphia remained faithful across the years to the risen Christ.**

- When Islam later swept across Asia Minor, Philadelphia was the last of the cities to fall.
- Even then, it did not fall by lack of courage or strength; but because the Christians of Philadelphia were betrayed by the “Christians so called” of Byzantium.

- **THEY ALL DID IT TOGETHER.**

They exalted Christ, met the needs of people in Jesus’ name, and reached out to the world with the gospel.

In several of the other messages, the Lord distinguishes those who are doing right from those who are doing wrong.

- In Pergamos there were those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, the doctrine of compromise. Not everyone, but enough to spoil the church.
- In Sardis, there were a few who had not defiled their garments. Almost everybody had, but a few faithful ones were left.
- But in Philadelphia, the words of the Lord are sent to everybody.
 - They were unified.
 - They all exalted Christ.
 - They all ministered to people in the name of Jesus.
 - They were all a part of taking the gospel to people near and far.
 - They were of one heart and of one work.

FOLKS, THIS IS THE KIND OF CHURCH CHRIST WANTS US TO BE!

- **EXALTING CHRIST**
- **MEETING NEEDS IN THE NAME OF JESUS**
- **REACHING THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL**
- **DOING IT ALL TOGETHER**

Does this sound familiar? It should.

- EXALTING CHRIST
- MEETING NEEDS
- REACHING THE WORLD

Does that mean our church logo is based on Christ's message to the church at Philadelphia? No. This is the kind of church the entirety of the New Testament shows us is the church that is pleasing to Christ.

And having these items in our logo does not in any way say we have arrived. It is not saying that these phrases perfectly describe our church.

It says, this is what we are striving to be.

Only, I'm sure you noticed. One component is missing.

- DOING IT ALL TOGETHER

That is the kind of church Jesus wants us to be.

Now, I am going to tell you, I think in many ways, we are like this description.

- I have guests from out of town all the time tell me that they love to come to our church when they are on vacation because of the worship, because of the way we exalt Christ.
- I don't think anybody who knows anything at all about our church would deny that we are busy with meeting the needs of people in the name of Jesus.
- Likewise, we are known inside and out as a church on mission, carrying the gospel to our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.
- And look at our weekly attendance report from last Sunday.

CHILDREN & YOUTH	31%
YOUNG ADULTS	23%
MEDIAN ADULTS	25%
SENIOR ADULTS	21%

I think it is honest to say that we fit this description in many ways.

But we do not perfectly fit it. We have not arrived. There are things in every one of these areas that need to be addressed, and there is repentance that needs to take place.

- **EXALTING CHRIST**
 - **We need to move out of evaluation mode and back into participation mode in our worship.**

For the first 18 months of trying to make the changes in worship style to reach more youth and young adults, we invited many of you to help us be evaluating things about both the music and the preaching.

We benefitted by those evaluations in helping us learn what we needed to do.

But those evaluations came at a price to you who were doing them, because at least in part, you sat in worship as an evaluator, noting what you thought was best and what you thought was not.

But now we all need to move back into a worship mode for the sake of exalting Christ together. We all need to be approaching worship to join in that worship of offering our praise, thanksgiving, and adoration to our Lord, with no other motive.

- **We need to be less conscious of ourselves and more conscious of the presence of the Lord.**

- **MEETING NEEDS IN THE NAME OF JESUS**

- **This is one of our strongest areas.**
- **We need to find ways to better spread the workload for these ministries across all of our age groups from youth to senior adults.**

- **REACHING THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL**

- **This is another of our strongest areas.**
- **We need to find ways to involve more who have never personally participated in one of our missions.**

- **DOING IT ALL TOGETHER**

- In many respects we have done well at this point. **This church for many years has an amazing spirit of unity. This is a gift from God!**
- **The Lord helped us maintain our unity by leading us into two worship services that allows two different worship styles.**
- This prevented our losing some of our median and senior adults who were not worshipping well in the band led style of worship.
- At the same time, this has threatened our unity somewhat because some resent the fact that it was necessary or they are offended by things that were said or done in getting us to the point of decision.
- Folks, listen. **The key word necessary to restore any breach of our unity is forgiveness.** If you are unhappy or offended with someone or a group of someones for things said or done, forgive them. As Christ forgave you, forgive them. The breach in unity is being caused by your unforgiveness.
- Brothers and sisters, we will never get rid of the distinctive preferences across generational lines. Working together and being a four generational church means we don't expect everyone to adopt our preferences. We allow for this diversity, and we honor one another in spite of these differences.

CONCLUSION: Dear, dear people. We have not arrived at fully being the church Jesus wants us to be. But we are steadily moving that direction. I believe we are closer than we have ever been, and that means the devil will be working all the harder to keep us from getting there.

Let's not let him. Don't let him get a foothold in your attitude. If you think badly about any person in this church family, forgive them. If the issue is of such importance that you cannot forgive them and move on then go see them, one on one, and try to work it out. But even then forgive them as Christ has forgiven us.

Why should we do this? Because Jesus is worthy of our doing it. When we do it, we honor Him. When we don't do it, we dishonor Him.