

Revelation 3:7-13 (W.J. C.) 53752

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In Revelation 3, in the address to Philadelphia, it is, "I have set before thee an opened door" (J.N.D. Trans.). The spirit of the world, and especially in religious arrangement, goes to shut the door against God; hence the need of the opened door, He having right of way to every soul—"My sheep hear My voice." In verse 11 it is not "Behold, I come quickly," but "I come quickly." We have the word "behold" elsewhere, a warning, or to call attention, which Philadelphia (seeing the state they were in) did not need; but they needed much the encouragement of "I come quickly:."

The Philadelphian state and that of the poor widow who cast into the treasury her two last mites is somewhat analogous. This act of devotedness is found at the end of Jewish failure and ruin. There is this one that gives her all. Her gift, though little, draws forth the Lord's approval.

Philadelphia presents a phase of the Church found at the end of its history here. First love left in Ephesus ends in Laodicea spewed out, or disowned as God's witness. The last four churches go on together to the end. Philadelphia and Laodicea are very opposite states. In Philadelphia, Christ is everything to them. In Laodicea, Christ is nothing to them; there is inside a big self-complacent "I," and Christ outside. This shows how things are today.

I want to speak a little of the foundation of the hope of the Church; that is, the Lord's coming. In the writings of Luther and many other Christian writers, we find no mention of it. But in the last century it has been taught, and brought into great prominence. God has been at work to revive the hope which had been lost.

The widow (Luke 21:2) and Philadelphia occupy a somewhat similar position. The widow has at heart God's interests at that time. Her, whole soul is bound up in the temple. She has before her what the temple is in God's unchanging thoughts for Israel's blessing. They made it "a house of merchandise." She had it before her according to faith's estimate of it—God's being faithful—and she cast in all her living. This was under His eye. He saw the value of her act, and at such a moment of failure and ruin that shortly after this He says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." "As some spake of the temple," etc. (v. 5), the Lord said it should all be thrown down. They were looking at the outward thing—the "goodly stones and gifts." Are we trying to keep up the outward thing? The temple, as the widow apprehended it in faith, was to stand. The inner state seen by the Lord in the widow, and the outward and visible thing seen by the disciples, were in great contrast. Philadelphia is something the same as the widow. The widow is seen at the end of Jewish apostasy and ruin—Philadelphia at the end of the Church's ruin.

Have we understood the total ruin the Church has become in man's responsibility? But God is active in grace above all the failure, and directs the hearts of His people to Christ who is all, and who is coming. "Hold that fast which thou hast." The encouragement fore this is, "I come quickly." You will see the value of "that which thou hast" when you notice the state in which Philadelphia was found; that is, devotedness to Christ—"Thou hast not denied My name." This marks attachment to Christ. "My patience"—it is association with Him in His patience in waiting. Philadelphia thus did not need the word "behold." "I come quickly" expresses His heart's desire to have His people with Him, and "quickly" is as fresh and true today as ever.

"That which thou hast"—it is having Christ, and devotedness carrying one on against a Christ-rejecting world. What the widow had would be of little value before men, but of great value "in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thess. 1:3). What she did would not be found put in a newspaper, or made much of in the world, but it drew forth His appreciation.

Let us see today what we have. Every bit of truth you have, have you got it so taught of God? We live in a, day of intellectuality. Nothing so tends to destroy spirituality as that. We need to possess truth in spiritual power. May the Lord encourage us today by seeing His unchanging faithfulness.... They had a little strength positive strength, though little. Let us take home the word, "I come quickly," and "Hold fast," etc. The very fact of being told to hold fast shows the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil at work to rob me of it. He says, "Hold fast," showing it can be done. The power is with Him.