

Letters from Heaven ~ Study 7

“Dead End Opened”

Revelation 3: 7-13

Introduction:

How would you feel living in the centre of an earthquake zone?

In the mid-First Century, cracks were appearing in Philadelphia’s walls daily and many people staying outside the city. In AD 17 it was devastated and for 5 years released from Roman tax, so that the city could be rebuilt. In response they renamed themselves Neo-Caesarea, but by AD 70 when help was again needed, the city underwent another name-change - this time to Philadelphia Flavia in honour of the Flavian dynasty of Emperors. Then the Romans ruled all vineyards be turned over to corn, to protect the wine harvest of Italy. Corn didn’t grow on the volcanic slopes of Philadelphia, so in disgust the city changed its name again, back to simple Philadelphia.

For starters...

1. What parallels of dependency can you think of with countries or corporations of the world today?
2. How do you think Philadelphians, and especially the Christians there would have felt?

Now read the passage

1. What images can you find which connect with the experience of collapsing buildings and changing identity?
2. What is evoked for you by the phrase “Holy and True” and how do you think it might communicate to the situation outlined in the introductory paragraph above?
3. The Christians felt themselves to be “weak” (v.8). What future does Jesus intend for them? (v.12)
4. In v.12 Jesus mentions three names which will be given to those who love him. What are they?
5. What is special about receiving the “name of God”? How do you respond to this gift?

6. The “city of God coming down” is a image representing the people of God being gathered. In what ways is it important for you to be part of God’s wider plan?
7. What do you think the “new name” refers to, and in what ways is it still “new” in our world?
8. If you were a Christian in Philadelphia, how would you feel hearing these words, what encouragement might you gain?
9. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear...” What personal encouragement or challenge do you find in this letter?
10. How might it affect your view of Christians in situations of weakness or uncertainty elsewhere in the world today?

Prayer

Brainstorm some areas of vulnerability for Christians in the world today and pray for them.