

LETTERS TO THE CHURCH

Philadelphia: The Faithful Church

Revelation: 3:7-13

Philadelphia



- Philadelphia is located about 30 miles southeast of Sardis
- Philadelphia means *brotherly love*
- Philadelphia was built to be a *missionary outpost* for the advancement of the Greek language, culture, and industry, because it was built where three other regions came together
- Philadelphia was built in a region where earthquakes were common

- Philadelphia was a prosperous city, with beautiful buildings , architecture, and vineyards
- Philadelphia had a Jewish synagogue within the city and the Jews claimed to be the followers of the true God

Jesus Introduces Himself

Revelation 3:7 (KJV) 7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*

- As usual, Jesus directs his letter to the angel of the church; the pastor or spiritual leader of the church
- Jesus expects the pastor to share the letter with the church
- Jesus describes Himself as:
 - *Holy*
 - The emphasizes the deity of Jesus
 - Jesus is saying I am holy, I am God
 - Holiness means to be set apart, and different from other beings, completely set apart
 - *True*
 - Jesus is saying He is true, not fake, or counterfeit
 - He is real in all He is and all He does **John 14:6 (KJV) 6** *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
 - *He that has the key of David*
 - David represents the Messianic throne and a key represents authority
 - Jesus is saying He alone has the sovereign authority to determine who enters and doesn't enter into God's kingdom **Isaiah 22:22 (NLT2) 22** *I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in*

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the royal court. When he opens doors, no one will be able to close them; when he closes doors, no one will be able to open them.

- *He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*
 - Jesus is saying no one has power greater than His
 - No one hinder, block or stop what Jesus does
 - Jesus alone determines who lives in heaven in the presence of God
 - No one else has the authority or the power to grant eternal life because Jesus alone has the power of and the keys
- In Jesus' description of Himself, there were no condemnations or criticisms of the church in Philadelphia

What Jesus Knows About the Church in Philadelphia

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

- As Jesus said to each of the seven churches, "*I know thy works...*"
- Jesus *knew* the church in Philadelphia served well under difficult circumstances
- Jesus commends the church in Philadelphia for four things:
 1. *The church took advantage of ministry opportunities*
 - Jesus set before the church in Philadelphia, an open door
 - The open door set before the church in Philadelphia was an open door for evangelism ***2 Corinthians 2:12 (NLT)12 When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me.***
 - Philadelphia already had a history of *evangelizing* the region to spread the Greek language, culture, and industry
 - Jesus has now opened the door for the church in Philadelphia to spread the *culture of His kingdom* in the region
 - Jesus told the church to see they had an open door
 - When we see God has opened a door of opportunity to advance the gospel, we are to walk through it
 - God wants us to use the *open door* to bring people into His kingdom
 - And when God opens the door of opportunity for us, no one can shut it
 - 2. *The church knew where its strength came from*
 - Even though we have little strength, we were strong enough to do the work of the Lord
 - Little strength does not mean Christians are weak, it means we are relying on the strength of the Lord
 - The church in Philadelphia realized they needed the strength of the Lord
 - It's not a matter of great strength or ability, it is *great dependability*

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- Apostle Paul found strength in his weakness **2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NLT2) 9 Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**
3. *The church kept His Word*
- The church in Philadelphia was *faithful* to Jesus and the Word of God
 - In practical terms:
 - They studied the Word of God
 - They lived by the Word of God
 - They proclaimed and shared the Word of God with believers and unbelievers
4. *The church didn’t deny His name*
- The church publicly expressed their allegiance to Jesus Christ
 - The church also lived in a way that was faithful to the name and character of Jesus Christ
 - When opposition came against the believers of the church, they were willing to stand against opposition, persecution, attacks, mistreatment, etc.

What Jesus Will do for the Christians in Philadelphia

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

- Jesus promises to take care of the believers in Philadelphia
- The believers in Philadelphia were often persecuted by Jewish people, whom Jesus called *the synagogue of satan*, because they call themselves followers of God, but reject Jesus Christ
- Jesus is he One came into the world to reveal God
- But Jesus vindicates the church by making their persecutors recognize they were wrong and some of them would be saved
- They would come and worship at their feet; note this *does not* mean that the Christians in Philadelphia would be worshipped, it means God would be worshipped in the *presence* of Christians
- The Jews will see Jesus loves the people they once persecuted
- Because the church in Philadelphia was patient or committed to the Word, Jesus promises to keep them *from* the hour of temptation, the hour trial
- The *hour of temptation* refers to the Great Tribulation, which precedes Jesus’ return to earth

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- The Great Tribulation is a period of trial unlike any the world has ever known
- But believers need not fear the Great Tribulation because we will be kept *from* it because we will not be a part of it **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NLT2)** **16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words.**
- The Great Tribulation will come to *test* those that *dwell* upon the earth

What Jesus Wants the Church in Philadelphia to Do

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

- Jesus wants the church in Philadelphia to *remember* that He is coming *quickly*
- Because Jesus' return will be unexpected, Jesus wants the church to hold fast to what they have
- What is the church in Philadelphia to hold fast to?
 1. The evangelistic opportunity
 2. Reliance on God
 3. Faithfulness to Jesus
- If they fail to continue doing these things, their crown may be *taken*
- If the church fails to *continue* in being faithful to Jesus, their crown may be taken or *given* to someone else
- This crown is *not* one of *royalty*, it's a crown a of *victory*
- Jesus wants us to finish our course with victory
- The person most likely to *steal* our crown is *ourselves*

Jesus' Promise to the Church in Philadelphia

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

- Jesus concludes His letter to the church in Philadelphia with a promise to those who overcome:
 - *I will make you a pillar in the temple of My God*
 - The overcomer will have a place of permanence and stability with God
 - Even though buildings in Philadelphia collapsed during earthquakes, the pillars remained standing
 - The pillar holds up the building

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- The only thing supporting the pillar is the foundation
- True pillars support the church, and they look to Jesus as their solid, reliable foundation
- *You shall go out no more*
 - The overcomer will have a place of stability and permanence with God, which is very different from the uncertainty of the world
 - The people in Philadelphia lived under the constant threat of earthquakes
 - The fear of earthquakes always had the people Philadelphia always going out and coming back in
 - They will never have to deal with any threats to their lives because they will be in the presence of the Lord
- *I will write on you the name of My God*
 - When you write your name on something, it's a symbol of possession and belonging
 - When God's name is written on us, it also a *symbol of honor*
 - But in heaven, no one has claim to us, but God, because we have been marked for all eternity as His
- *I will write on you, the name of the city of My God*
 - Heaven's capital city will be the new Jerusalem
- *I will write on you, My new name*
 - When we get to heaven, Jesus will have a new name
 - What will that new name be?
 - No one knows but God Himself, but He has not revealed it
 - Jesus will gain the victory for us, the victory over all enemies including the most terrible enemy of all; death and hell
 - Jesus closes by saying, ***“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”***
 - Receive the message to the church in Philadelphia
 - If we want to one day hear the praise, encouragement welcome Jesus gave the church in Philadelphia; we must live like them