

Revelation 3:7-13

Φιλαδέλφεια

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A QUICK REMINDER.

These letters were written to the *literal historical* church that existed in that time, but they were also written to apply to the *church at large* throughout all the world and all the ages. Also there is also the *individual aspect* to these letters. Since the church is made up of individuals these letters also apply to all of us on that level as well.

- I. SALUTATION AND NAME OF CHURCH IDENTIFIED, Verse 7
 - A. “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;”
 1. Philidelphia
 - a) A city within the Roman province of Asia
 - b) Much more inland than the others
 - c) Philadelphia = brotherly love. This word can be seen six other times in the New Testament (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7). Here in Revelation it is used for the seventh and finale time and only here is it used to speak of the city.

- d) Named after a king of Pergamos in the Lydian empire, Attalus Philadelphus, who also built the city and he named the city Philadelphia because of the love that he had for his brother.
- e) The city was located Lydia some 28 miles or 45 kilometers southeast of Sardis
- f) Throughout the city's long history it suffered through several severe earthquakes which almost completely destroyed it. "The most recent rebuilding was in A.D. 17"¹
- g) Ala-Shehr is the name today and it means "the city of God". Out of the seven cities in these letters this is the one city that still has a church within it.
- h) To this church the Lord will have nothing negative to say about them.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF CHRIST AS SENDER, Verse 7

A. "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;"

1. There are a few distinctions about this letter that are very interesting

- a) Along with Smyrna this is the only other city with no condemnation given to it.
- b) In the other six letters Jesus takes a title from the first chapter to introduce Himself i.e. in each one of the other letters Jesus points them back to the

Church	Title of Christ in letter	Vision of Jesus in Rev 1
Ephesus	"These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;" Rev. 2:1	"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks" Rev. 1:13 "And he had in his right hand seven stars:" Rev. 1:16
Smyrna	"These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;" Rev. 1:8	"Fear not; I am the first and the last:" Rev 1:17 "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen" Rev 1:18
Pergamos	"These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;" Rev. 2:12	"and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword:" Rev. 1:16
Thyatira	"These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass;" Rev. 2:	"and his eyes [were] as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;" Rev. 1:14-13
Sardis	"These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;" Rev. 3:1	"And he had in his right hand seven stars:" Rev. 1:16
Philadelphia	"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;" Rev. 3:7	- No Relation to Chapter 1 at all-
Laodicea	These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;" Rev. 3:14	"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Rev. 1:11

¹ John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ Pg. 83

image that John saw of Him in chapter 1. This he does to clearly state His position over the church as judge of the church. (See Chart above) But in this letter the title that Jesus takes to introduce himself has no correlation to the vision of Christ given to us in the first chapter. In fact it comes from a rather obscure passage in Isaiah 22:22.

(1) Compare Isaiah 22 with Revelation 3:7

Isaiah 22:22	Revelation 3:7
And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”	“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;”

The Story back in Isaiah 22 is about the valley of vision. A story about a scribe by the name of Shebna. He had failed in his service to the Lord and the Lord rejected him and told him that He would give his position to another man named Eliakim. To this man the Lord said would have the keys of David and he shall open and shut, he will have authority over the house of David. In this giving of authority to Eliakim we see a picture of Jesus. Jesus in Revelation goes back to that prophecy and tells that he has absolute and total authority.

2. Jesus also describes Himself as “he that is holy” and “he that is true”

a) These two attributes show Jesus to be claiming to be very God

- (1) “Holy”...He is the Holy One. This is the way the Jehovah God described himself in Leviticus 11:44 “ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for *I am holy*.” Also see Isaiah 57:15
- (2) “True”...He is true. In Jesus’ finale words with the Father before going to the cross he prayed in John 17:3 “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only *true* God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Also in 1 John 5:20 it says “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is *true*, and we are in him that is *true*, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the *true* God, and eternal life.”

III. ASSERTION OF KNOWLEDGE, Verses 8-10

A. “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.”

1. “I have set before thee...” The open door mentioned in this passage is unknown. In light of the next verse it could have been an open door of escape from those

that were harming or persecuting them for their christian testimony. It also could be speaking of an open door for ministry. What ever opportunity this open door provided (wether for escape of ministry) one thing we know for sure is that it would be impossible for anyone to shut it.

- a) If this door was one of escape then the fact that none could shut it is very comforting
- b) If this was an open door for the furtherance of the gospel then this would be extremely encouraging and encourage the church on in their endeavor to reach the lost with the gospel.

(1) We need open doors for ministry. If Paul did so do we.

In 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul says, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and [there are] many adversaries."

In 2 Corinthians 2:12 Paul says, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to [preach] Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,"

And in Colossians 4:3 Paul said, "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"

- (2) May God open for us great and effectual doors for the preaching of the gospel and His Word in this Christ rejecting world. Notice that when God does provide an open door for ministry it shall not be shut! We need not fear the loss of opportunity because of those that would be against us. Because He is for us who can be against us. no weapon formed against us shall be able to shut the doors of ministry that our Lord has opened unto us.
- (3) Ministry is only effective if indeed the Lord has opened the door. We don't want to bestow labor in a place the Lord has not called us to. We can't build or keep what we have built if the Lord isn't the one doing all the work! "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

2. "Thou hast a little strength..."

- a) Some say that if any rebuke is found in this letter it is here. But this is not at all a condemnation but a recognition by Christ that there was in the "Philadelphian church at least a significant degree of spiritual power which comes from God, and this assured them a continuance of their testimony through the open door which he had set before them." ²
- b) "It is not that the church still has a little strength and thus can still function to some degree. Rather, the very fact that it has but little strength is itself the source of its power for this means it must wholly depend upon the Lord. 'My

² Ibid

strength is made perfect in weakness,' says the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:9)."³

3. "Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name."

- a) They kept all the doctrine of the christian faith and did not dilute it nor pollute it. It was the same system of doctrine which was held by the apostolic church.
- b) In that they kept the Lord's word it is only then natural that they wouldn't deny his name. To deny the word of God is to unavoidably deny the Lord's name too. It only takes but a little time to go from the one blasphemy to the other.

(1) Psalm 138:2

(2) 1 Peter 1:23-25

B. "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."

1. "Synagogue of satan..." The same phrase that is used in the letter to the church in Smyrna (Revelation 2:9). These were not Jews in the truest sense. Yes by blood but not by faith and inward reality.

- a) Romans 2:28 "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God."

2. "I will make them to come and worship..."

- a) These enemies of the christians in the church of Philadelphia would be brought "to worship before their feet—certainly not to worship *them*, but rather to worship Christ in His redeeming grace. Since this promise is not one of salvation to such pseudo-Jews, but of condemnation, its fulfillment probably is the great judgment assembly as expounded in Philippians 2:10-11."⁴
- b) Sometime the most obstinate rejecters of the cross of Christ end up getting saved. Paul was one such like these Jews, he persecuted and destroyed the church before getting saved but then became in Christ one of its greatest builders of all.

The strong rejection sometimes can indicate powerful conviction within. Occasionally the very stubbornness which fortifies the sinners rejection will be used by the Lord to bring that person to repentance and faith in Him.

³ Henry Morris, The Revelation Record, Pg. 71

⁴ Henry Morris, The Revelation Record, Pg. 72, 73

C. "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."

1. A wonderful blessing of keeping is given to these saints because they kept the word of Christ's patience.
2. We can see here very clearly that these letters had a message that went beyond the local historical church they were written to. This "hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world" is a direct reference to the period of time known as the great tribulation. This "hour" certainly did not occur at the time this letter was written to the Philadelphian church nor has it occurred yet. So that which is written here speaks of a yet future hour of temptation with a yet future escape promised to those that have kept the word of His patience.
3. Here the pre and post tribulationist are divided. The post tribers believe that we will have to go through the tribulation and Jesus will keep us untouched by the calamities that are to befall the whole world in that hour.
4. The problem that the post-tribulation believer has is found in the words kept and keep. They are the same word used twice and it is a play on words. It is "because you have kept I will keep"
5. The word that is used for keep means to attend to carefully and or to take care of, not to allow damage to occur. So they say that we will be kept in this way through the tribulation. But it is impossible to produce any Biblical evidence of such a keeping. Read Revelation 6:9, 10; 13:5-8; 20:4. All we see is the saints that are killed and put to death for their faith not kept. The only ones that will be kept are those Jews sealed by God to be a witness in the world.
6. The hour and the temptation. this speaks about a particular hour or time period in human history and particular testing and trial and it comes upon all those that dwell upon the earth, speaking of the inhabited earth, this is speaking of a global judgment that is prescribed. A specific judgment that happens at a specific time.
7. The purpose: to try those that dwell upon the earth. Earth dwellers, one word, used 10 times in the book of revelation and always refers to unbelievers.
8. The faithful ones (those that are faithful to the Lord) will be exempt from this great hour of temptation. Those that have kept the word of the patience that he has endured!
9. Keeping God's word has

IV. COMMENT AND CONCERN, N/A

V. EXHORTATION, Verses 11

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

VI. PROMISED BLESSING, Verse 12

A. "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."

VII. ADMONITION TO HEED, Verse 13

A. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."