

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA (Rev. 3:7-13)

Read Revelation 3:7-13 (NIV)

REV 3:[7] "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

****What Scholars Say****

DESTINATION

Rev.3:7. The city of Philadelphia was 28 miles southeast of Sardis. It was located in an area noted for its agricultural products but afflicted with earthquakes which destroyed the city several times, most recently about A.D. 37. The word *Philadelphia*, means "brotherly love," which occurs seven times in the Bible (Rom 12:10; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7[twice]; Rev 3:7).

Christ described Himself as the One **who is holy and true, who holds the key of David**, and who is able to open or shut a door which no one else could open or shut.

The holiness of Christ is a frequent truth in Scripture (1 Peter 1:15), and being holy He is worthy to judge the spiritual life of the Philadelphia church.

The **holy One** and **true One** are divine titles. In the Bible "holiness" is the very essence Of God, the quality that makes God what He is, different and set apart from human beings. It carries a sense of separateness from sin, of exclusiveness, of uniqueness. And this divine quality applies to objects or people who are set apart, dedicated to the service and worship of God. The people of God are called "the holy ones" or "the saints." "The Holy One of God" was a Messianic title (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34; J. 6:69), meaning one who was God's servant and did God's will. When applied to Jesus it would also imply Deity.

The Greek for the **true** one occurs in Rev. 3:14 and Rev. 19:11 and seems to mean "the true Messiah."

Who holds the key of David seems to refer to Isa 22:22, where it relates to Messianic authority. The keys He carries are a sign of His authority, the key shows He has authority, authority to rule David's Kingdom.

What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. Jesus possesses the key to the Kingdom of God and entrance into eternal life. **What he opens** may refer to evangelistic opportunity or entrance into eternal life, the consummated Kingdom at the end of this age.

After the door is opened, no one can close it – salvation is assured. Once it is closed, no one can open it – judgment is certain.

Rev. 3:[8] I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

COMMENDATION

Rev. 3:8. As in the messages to the other churches, Christ stated, **I know your deeds.** Works are not just specific deeds but the manner of life, the behavior of these people. We could say it like this: “I know the life that you have lived,” “I know all that you have done.” **See, I have placed before you an open door ...** it appears that the open door comes as a result of the people’s faithfulness, their persistent life of faith and the works that follow their life.

Rev. 3:8 - See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. As stated before, some see this as a door of opportunity, a door open to preach the gospel. Paul said in 1 Cor. 16:9 – “*For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*” But some see this as a free entrance into the Messianic kingdom, which no one will be able to block.

There is no word of rebuke for the Philadelphia church, though Christ said, **I know that you have little strength.** These words, however, become a basis for His Christ praise that **you have kept My word and have not denied My name.**

Despite their lack of strength, the Philadelphia Christians have been faithful to Christ, They have followed His teachings, they have obeyed His commands, they have been faithful to His message, they have been obedient to His instructions and **have not denied His Name.**

In other words, Despite their little strength they did not deny the Christian faith, they did not disown Christ, they did not renounce their faith, they did not say, “I don’t believe in Jesus Christ.” They have not apostatized (renounced their loyalty to Christ).

Rev. 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Rev. 3:9. Christ referred to their enemies as **the synagogue of Satan** (cf. 2:9). They were Jews who opposed the believers' Christian testimony. False religion has always been opposed to the true Christian faith. The day will come, however, when all opponents of the faith will have to acknowledge the truth (cf. Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10-11). Then Christ declared, **I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.** In the ancient world, captives were often forced to prostrate themselves before their conquerors (Isa. 49:23; 60:14). The churches enemies will ultimately bow down and acknowledge that Christians, followers of Christ, disciples of the Lord, are the ones that Christ loves.
(Patti’s story – Phil.2:5-11)

Rev. 3: [10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

PROMISE

Rev. 3:10. The church in Philadelphia received no rebuke from Christ. Instead they were commended and given a promise because they had been willing to **endure patiently**. The promise was, **I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth**. This is an explicit promise that the Philadelphia church will not endure the hour of trial which is to be unfolded. The Philadelphia church would not enter this future time of trouble.

The expression "**the hour of trial**" (a time period) makes it clear that they would be kept out of that period.

REV 3:[11] I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Rev. 3:11. Additional promises were given. Christ promised, **I am coming soon**, a concept repeated often in the Book of Revelation. The thought is not simply that of coming soon but coming suddenly or quickly (cf. 1:1; 2:16). They were exhorted in the light of His coming to continue to hold on to what they have, **so that no one will take your crown**. The Help for Translators Handbook, put out by the United Bible Society, a book that helps with Bible translation, says this: *"The crown that Christ gives to his followers as the prize for their faithfulness must be kept safe from all who would, by some means, take it from them. What is meant is that they are to remain faithful so as not to lose their ultimate reward; life with Christ in the Messianic Kingdom."*

Rev. 3: [12] Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

Rev. 3:12. Everyone who is an over comer will become a **pillar in the temple of... God**. This is of course symbolic of the permanent place in heaven for believers, referred to here as the temple of God. The entire New Jerusalem will be the ultimate temple (21:22). In contrast to earthly temples and earthly pillars which fall, believers will continue forever in the temple. Christ specified that He was referring to **the city of My God, that is, the New Jerusalem** (cf. 21:2). He repeated His promise: **I will also write on him My new name** (cf. 2:17; 14:1; 19:12). Because believers have identified with Christ by faith, He will identify Himself with them.

Rev. 3: [13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

EXHORTATION

Rev. 3:13. The letter closed with the familiar appeal, hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The promise given to the Philadelphia church and the challenge to continue to be faithful is certainly God's Word to His whole church today.

****My Thoughts****

1. There are four things that Christ sees in the Philadelphia church. (a) He sees there works. (b) Although they have little strength: they have (c) Kept His Word. (d) They have not denied His Name (Person). Only praise was given for the Philadelphia church.

2. The key of David (v.7) represents the Davidic Messiahs authority to open the door of invitation into His kingdom. After the door is opened, no one can close it – today is the day of salvation. Once it is closed, no one can open it – judgment is certain.

I like Jesus simple Eschatology (the doctrine of future events): Matt. 13:47-51.

3. “The Hour of Trial” is the period of testing that precedes the consummation or entering of His future Kingdom. It can be looked upon in three different ways:

(a) There will be a future time of great tribulation from which true believers will be spared.

(b) The church will go through the time of tribulation and that God will keep them strong in the midst of it.

(c) An hour of trial or tribulation upon the churches in John’s day in which the Philadelphia church will be spared. (example: God sovereignty wanted to save the squirrel.)

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA (Rev. 3:7-13)

****Questions****

REV 3:7 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. (NIV)

1. Who spoke these words and instructed John to write them down? (3:7)

2. What church was the focus of this letter from Jesus? (3:7)

3. How did the speaker in this passage identify Himself? (3:7)

4. What did Christ say about His power? (3:7)

[8] I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

1. What five things did Jesus say to and about this church?

[9] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

1. By what descriptions or names did Jesus call those who claimed to be Jews? (3:9)

2. What humbling act did Jesus say He would force the enemies of the church of Philadelphia to perform? (3:9) (Patti's story – Phil. 2:5-11)

[10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

1. What worldwide event was predicted by Christ? (3:10)

2. Why will the world experience an "hour of trial"? (3:10)

3. What was promised to the church at Philadelphia because of its patient endurance? (3:10)

REV 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

1. How did Jesus instruct the believers in Philadelphia to prepare for His coming? (3:11)

[12] Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

1. What did Jesus promise the over comers (the faithful)?

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

1. In addition to the church at Philadelphia, who else was encouraged to heed this message? (3:13)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(NIV) New International Version

Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society
All rights reserved.

New Testament LESSON MAKER

Colo. Springs, CO 80935

Discipleship Evangelism

delessons.org

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Copyright 1983, SP Publications
All rights reserved.

Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Copyright 1963 by Finis Jennings Dake

The NIV Study Bible

Copyright 1985 by Zondervan Corporation

Life Application Bible

Copyright 1988 by Tyndale House Publishers.
Wheaton, IL 60189

The King James Study Bible

Copyright 1988, 2013 by Liberty University

The Jeremiah Study Bible

Copyright 2013 by David Jeremiah

UBS Handbook the Revelation to John

United Bible Societies, New York

Spirit Filled Life Bible

Copyright 1991 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.