

I. Church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)

A. Historical Context - The city of Philadelphia was on the site of modern-day Alashehir at the junction of trade routes. The imperial route from Rome passed through Philadelphia, giving it the name “the gateway to the East” and making it an important financial city, and very prosperous. Archeological research indicates heavy Christian influence during and after the time period that this letter was written. This church has remained true to Jesus through the centuries, even when Islam became the dominant religion, Christian congregations still flourished. Of the seven churches, only Philadelphia has spanned the centuries.

B. The Letter to the Church of Philadelphia

1. The Revelation of Jesus – He who is Holy, He who is True, He who has the Key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one can open.
 - a) He who is Holy - As a man, Jesus was holy or set apart fully to obey the Father. He understands what it means to walk out costly commitments among sinful people on earth. He is a sympathetic high priest. He was and is completely submitted and dedicated to God. (Heb. 4:15, 5:8)
 - b) He who is True - Christ is referencing the fulfillment that He accomplished on the cross (overcoming of sin and giving salvation) as promised in the OT. God is faithful to what he promises. What He says He will do is reliable and genuine. (Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18)
 - c) The Key of David – This is a reference to Hezekiah's servant, Eliakim, received authority over David's house, including access to all the king's treasures. Jesus claimed to have God's full administrative authority over all the nations as the ultimate heir of the house of David in the Millennial Kingdom. It's His privilege to open and shut doors of the resources of heaven and earth to accomplish the will of God. (Is. 9:6, 22:20-23)
 - d) He who opens and shuts – Jesus opens and closes doors that no other power in creation can tamper with. Nothing can hinder His plans or will. He will resource His people to accomplish in partnership with Him all that is His heart. This does not imply a life of easy circumstances. However, it does imply that as long as you say yes to Him, nothing can keep you from accomplishing the will of God for your life. (Acts. 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:8-9)

2. Affirmation and Edification - Jesus commends their faithful perseverance to stay true to the testimony of who Jesus is even in the midst of heavy persecution.
 - a) You have little Strength – They operated in humility and leaned heavily upon the power of the Holy Spirit rather than their own power. They understood and walked out what it meant to operate in the grace of God. (2 Cor. 12:8-10)
 - b) Keep His Word - This body of believers not only understood the scriptures but applied them to their lives. They were doers of the Word. (Mat. 7:24-25; Jam. 1:21-27)
 - c) Not denied His Name – Denying the name of Jesus is much more broad than the act of denying that you believe in Him. It is ongoing actions or words that directly contradict His nature and character. (Pro. 30:8-9; Jude 1:4)
3. Correction proving Love – None Given. The parallel between Smyrna and Philadelphia (churches receiving no correction) is the oppression and persecution of those of the “Synagogue of Satan”.
 - a) Physical descendants of Abraham who are Jews by blood that deny Jesus are not spiritually Jews in God’s eyes. In rejecting Jesus, they were of their father the Devil. Many Jews denied Jesus’ divinity and resurrection and severely persecuted those who believed in Him. (Jhn. 8:41-47; Rom. 2:28-29)
4. Exhortation to Respond – Jesus calls them to “hold fast” and “endure”
 - a) He warned them not to allow anyone to influence them in such a way that they would end up losing their eternal reward that they gained. He admonishes them to continue in the same measure of intentional love and obedience in response to His love. (1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Jhn 7-8)

5. Promises for Overcomers – Jesus gives 6 promises to the overcomers in Philadelphia. Some of these are eternal rewards and some are realities that they will experience in this age.
- a) Promise 1 - *I will make them bow down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.* Jesus will reveal to the nations the fact that He loves His people. The unbelieving Jews that hate these believers will witness Jesus' love towards them in a soon coming day. Eventually they will admit their error, possibly at the judgment of unbelievers but hopefully earlier. The scriptures speak clearly of a future repentance of ethnic Israel at Messiah's second coming that will result in the Jews' respectful treatment of Gentile believers. (Isa. 45:14; 49:23; Ezek. 36:23; 37:28; Zech. 8:20-23; Jhn 17:23)
 - b) Promise 2 - *I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.* To be a pillar is a position of honor and authority in the age to come. Pillars are symbolic of stability and beauty. All believers are part of God's spiritual temple; some will be pillars who hold a position of authority, responsibility, and honor in the Millennium. Jesus promised them that they would never be removed from their place of honor. (Isa 22:15-25; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 2:21-22)
 - c) Promise 3 - *I will write on him the name of My God:* Having the name of God on us means being recipients of His desire, authority, partnership, and revelation of His heart and beauty. \
 - d) Promise 4 - *I will write on him the name of the City of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God:* I believe this speaks of two realities. Having an authoritative place in the New Jerusalem and having the ability to comprehend the city of God.
 - e) Promise 5 - *I will write on him My new name.* Jesus will give unique insights of revelation of His heart and beauty. To receive a new name from God means to receive new aspects of who He is that gives new aspects of our identity, gifts, and a new ministry assignment in this age and the age to come.

- f) Promise 6 - *I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* There are two main interpretations of being “kept”. Either being preserved in the midst of, or being removed from the scene. In other words, a “spiritual keeping” by enabling us to be faithful in our obedience, or a “physical keeping” by taking us away from physical danger. It is the core conviction of this leadership team that this verse speaks of the preservation of our faith in the midst of the great tribulation rather than our removal from it.
- John recorded these very words of Jesus in his gospel account. Jesus did not ask that believers be removed from the scene, but be kept in victory in the midst of trouble by being enabled to stand strong before Satan’s attack. Jesus specifically clarified that He did not want His disciples removed from the earthly scene. It refers to the grace not to yield to unfaithfulness. (Jn. 17:15)
 - Jesus promised spiritual protection, which often will include physical protection as the Lord supernaturally shields some in the midst of the fire of His judgment or by causing His judgment to pass by a geographic area. Christ calls those that are in the midst of tribulation to persevere and cling to His word. Nowhere in the scriptures does Jesus indicate that He will “remove” or “exit” His bride from the earth because of trial or tribulation. (Dan. 12:7-10; Mat. 24)
 - The Goshen reality of the exodus gives us a good grid for being “kept” from the hour of trial. ([Ex. 8:22-24, 9:4-6, 10:23, 11:7; Is. 32:18-19](#))