

Rev. 3:7-13

*7“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:*

*8‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. 10‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 13‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

Established by Eumenes of Pergamum around 189 BC. He was the first king, and he left it to his brother, Attalus who was so faithful in his brotherly love that he got the nickname, Philedelphus, which means brotherly love. The name stuck.

It was a small place in John's time. Situated on a hill at the base of a large mountain. It had a good military advantage being up a little higher than the surrounding country.

It was an outpost for Hellenism. The Greeks were trying to make everyone Greek of course and this city had the distinction of being as far east as that effort went.

They had an earthquake in 17AD that flattened the city completely. Tiberius helped them rebuild. But at the cost of course of Roman emperor worship. It was said by 12AD that the original Lydian

language was completely gone.

Vs. 7 “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:*

*He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:*

The introduction to the letter at Philadelphia is different from the rest so far. It doesn't come from ch. 1 like the rest. It is very much Old Testament - ish.

These folks were Bible people, and their bible was the Old Testament.

*He who is holy*

I don't think we appreciate the word. What is Holiness, and what is it to me?

I'm not sure our fallen minds can full grasp what it means to be Holy. We have an obscured understanding of what it means to be un-holy.

We don't think we're 'that bad'. Mostly we don't think about it period. But for the most part, we aren't particularly repulsed by our sin.

We acknowledge our condition, but we have a skewed perspective.

Sin is all we know. All our planet (cosmos) knows. Everyone has the same disease - more or less. We look around and think, on a scale of 1 - 10, we're probably a 9. We don't sell drugs. We don't engage in sex trade with enslaved minors. We vote conservative. We're faithful to our wives ~ husbands ~ kids.

Is there really that big a gap between a 9 on this cosmos and Holy God?

Maybe the best way to understand holiness is to re-look at a picture of someone like us standing in the presence of Holy God. The picture of Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3. I'm sure he was a 9 in his world. Maybe a 10!

Zech. 3:1 *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" 3Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.*

*Joshua was clothed with filthy garments* Do I have to remind you the hebrew here is a word you would use to describe excrement. Our righteousness is excrement to Holy God.

Isaiah 64:6 says it again, just so we don't miss it; *6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment*

The word in Isaiah is *menstrual cloth*. God is so explicit in describing our condition, we don't like to even use the words. Foul. Beyond vocabulary of decent people foul. That's us. That's a 9 on 1-10. Filthy.

Holiness is perfect sinless, spotless, perfection.

Isaiah 59:1,2

*1Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short*

*That it cannot save;*

*Nor is His ear so dull*

*That it cannot hear.*

*2But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

Seperation. If someone in a white suit goes down into the sewer, what wins? Does the sewer become white, or does the white suit become sewer?

It gives a whole new meaning to Holy One. Here the Holy One is the author of this letter to this church. Seperation is ended. These folks are washed.

*who is true*

Jesus is perfect holiness, and He is perfect truth. God incarnate. Jesus said, "Thy word is truth". He is the incarnate Word. The logos.

*who has the key of David*

Authority. Keys are authority.

At His ascension, after the cross, Jesus said; "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*"

To David was promised a throne, and authority, that would last forever. Jesus says, I am the one who has that key. *who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens*

Sovereignty!

Jesus is the sovereign King! Perfect in Holiness. Perfect in Truth. He has the authority to reign forever! Over this world! That is the goal of everything.

That's who is writing this letter. Greetings from the Almighty.

This is where I want to go to church. Sovereignty of Christ; Kingdom - authority to reign on earth - of Christ; Holiness of Christ; Christ the Logos, the word of Truth; all spoken there.

No other church of the seven converses at this level. This is where I want to hang out.

*Vs. 8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*

*I know your deeds* Did I mention omniscience in my list above? Add it. He knows everything.

*Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut* One of the things I have been noticing in these combined letters to the churches; This is a picture of the church in all the ages, in every size, shape, color and style.

One thing I thought about in this letter is that only 2 in 7 are assets. Satan has surprising reign. He hasn't been limited much. The church is definitely NOT off limits, in fact it seems almost the reverse or that is true.

5 of the 7 churches are despoiled by him. 1 of the seven is crushed to death by him. Only 1 of seven gets some traction and actually advanced in battle against the king of this world. 14%. Even that number seems high. Probably because of where I live.

What is the whole open door closed door thing here? I think Jesus is using that exactly as we would understand and use it.

Paul says to the Corinthians; 16:8 *But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; 9for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

Same meaning here. Who does it?

Well you could argue, their faithfulness did this; *because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name*

Or you could argue that God does this. *I will set before you.* Or you could argue that Satan doesn't get in the way of this church. It's all sovereignty. Each argument can hold some water, but it's the sovereign pleasure of God to open this door for this church to march through.

*because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name*

Jesus repays faithfulness with fruitfulness. This is the missionary church.

If you like the idea of these churches representing a time line through church history, this philadephian era spanned the great mission movements from the 1750's through the 1920's.

And maybe some of us are still IN this era of the church. It could run concurrent with the Laodicean era right up to the rapture.

*9 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.*

Any jew reading this would say, no! That's backwards. The scriptures say the world is going to bow down to the jews.

*Isaiah 60:14 The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

*And; Isaiah 45:14 This is what the LORD says: "The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans--they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, 'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.'"*

How can both of those truth's be true. Which one is it?

Well, both. Both are true. Israel has temporarily been set aside. These jews that tormenting the church are blinded. Duped by Satan to do his bidding. For now, they are a synagogue of Satan doing harm to God's cause.

And some day they will bow down to this little group of christians. They'll admit that God's love was towards this little group of gentile believers.

These are harsh words here. They say they are jews but are not, but they

lie.

The jews had scattered everywhere after 70 AD. There's no doubt that who Jesus is talking about here were jewish ethnoses. Ethnic jews. Born jews.

But when they crucified their messiah, God removed them from the olive tree and grafted in wild olive branches.

So the christians in Philadelphia had been grafted into God's tree, and the ethnic jews had been removed. Now they were Satan's synagogue.

Judgement is coming for those jews who are no longer jews. And they will, in that day, see and know that Jesus, the messiah, loved these wild branches.

*all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel*

Yet, God has a day when the real olive branches will be grafted back into His olive tree. In the tribulation 1/3 of the jews will recognize their messiah, and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son. They'll be grafted back in, and all of the old testament promises to the jews will yet be fulfilled.

The nations will bow down before the jews in that day. The synagogue of satan will bow down to the church in that day. Our God is big enough to make both promises happen just as He wrote them.

And in that same context of end time things, this stunning promise;

*10' Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

First of all, let's define "this hour".

*I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to*

*come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

Has there ever been an hour, an era, an event that 'tested' the whole world? Yes. Noah experienced it. The whole world covered with water. All life lost except those who escaped on Noah's boat.

*that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth* is terminology that describes a Noahic event. Something the whole world experiences.

That hasn't happened since Noah. But here it says it will happen. This can only be talking about the events described in this book we're studying. Cataclysmic events that the entire world will all experience together.

But notice the promise; *Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

Clearly, the church that obediently 'keeps' the word of God, and perseveres will be spared going through this trial.

Does that sound like a conditional promise? Is it fair to assume that the church that "doesn't keep His words" that doesn't have His perseverance will NOT enjoy this blessing?

Can we say that Thyatira type churches and Sardis type churches, and Laodicea type churches will not receive the benefits of this promise? Let me say it a little scarier. Can we say that Thyatira type 'christians', and Sardis type 'christians', and luke warm Laodicea type 'christians' will not receive the benefit of this promise?

That's what I'm saying. Read Matthew 25 again. I think Jesus taught this over and over and over throughout His ministry. Word pictures galore. Wheat and tares. The wheat goes into the barn. The tares get burned up. Sheep and goats.

I think this happens at the rapture. True spirit indwelt believers will leave in the rapture. False 'believers' who are just along for the ride and the fellowship and the good times or whatever the reason, who DO NOT HAVE CHRIST, will get vomited out of His mouth. Now I'm getting ahead of myself. That's next week.

*2Cor. 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*

*Rom. 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.* My salvation verse.

You don't want to fail that test. You'll be looking in used book stores for a copy of "*left behind*"

Sadly, I think the churches are FULL of people who are going to fail that test on that day.

*11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

Why do we need this verse. It's going to be easy for us true believers, right. We'll be snatched away, out of this world, before any of that bad stuff starts to happen, right?

Maybe not. There is stress here. Stress for believers. Hang on for dear life! He's coming quickly! Just gotta hang on for one more hour. Stress. Are we ready for stress? Are we building up our spiritual muscles so when this day comes, if it comes for us, NO ONE is going to take our crown.

Other christians have faced this. Read Fox's book of Martyrs. We lazy, fat, American christians are the exception, not the rule. Most christians through the ages, had to be ready to *hang on*. Many faced just such a test. What about us?

*12'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore;*

This probably had very special meaning to the folks who lived in Philadelphia. In 17 AD there was an earthquake that literally flattened the place. After that there were aftershocks that would knock things down about as quick as you could put them up. The folks who lived there were constantly running OUT of whatever they were in.

Here, Jesus says, if you overcome, I'll make you pillars that will never come down.

Interestingly, if you do Google images, what you get is pillars of a byzantine church, long after the one this letter is written too. They probably were well aware of this letter, and figured they were going to make some PILLARS. They're like 60' X 60'. The church is gone but the huge pillars are there.

*and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

Philadelphia's name changed. Now it is Aleshahir.

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

So, let's back track. I feel like I didn't do a good job of fleshing out what it is about this church that made Jesus love them.

He did you know. It's in verse 9.

What was it that set them apart from virtually all of the other churches, save Smyrna.

*because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*

Three things, but one of them is "root cause" I think. *have kept my word.*

I believe that is what sets one church apart from all the "other" churches.

This church was a bible church. They built their existence around the book. Study the book together. Teach it. Understand it. DO it. Change course as often and as difficult as this book requires. I think they were people of the Book. They were under submission to this book. Submitted to understanding and following what it says. We have the same book.

The other 2 things mentioned are by-products of being serious students of the Word of God.

Spiritual power. He said '*you have a little power*'. I've seen spiritual power in action. It is always associated with this book. Lives are changed. Miracles happen. Doors for effective opportunity are opened. Satan is beaten down.

None of that happens on this worlds physical level. This is spiritual warfare. People of the book conduct spiritual warfare. Satan gets really really angry when christians work together at this level.

And finally, "have not denied my name."

There are consequences of getting out of the worlds big line, and getting in the line behind Jesus name. Real consequences! The world may shunn you. You might not get promoted at work. Your neighbors might talk about you behind your back.

IN a world that's madly working to be 100% secular, it will be harder and harder to not deny His name. "Tolerant" folks will become highly intolerant of someone who has a standard different than theirs. Open persecution may break out. This church stood defiant to any one who would have them deny that they belonged to Jesus, and that the Book had authority over their lives.

That's the church we want to be.