

Philadelphia – The Church with the Open Door

Revelation 3: 7-13

Philadelphia is the sixth church addressed by Jesus. Like Smyrna, Jesus offered no rebuke, only encouragement for their faithfulness and endurance in the midst of opposition. Jesus knew they were a people of “little strength,” and yet they prevailed in a hostile environment, maintaining their witness for the Lord. Many agree they faced intense opposition from legalistic Jews, and likely were expelled from worship within the synagogues. As you examine this letter, you find many references to the Old Testament. It appears that Jesus sought to comfort the church, reassuring them of their true identity in Him, while reminding them of a secure future.

Philadelphia was situated on a major Roman road that led from Troas in the west through Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis, and then to Philadelphia in the east. The city derives its name from the loyalty between the two brothers who were influential in founding the city: Eumenes II and his younger brother, Attalus II. The younger brother resisted pressure from Rome to turn against his older sibling, earning him the nickname “Philadelphus” (“brotherly love”) ... Like Sardis, Philadelphia was subject to earthquakes, and in AD 17 the city was devastated by the major quake that hit the region. Because of lingering aftershocks, many of the residents lived outside the city for a time and farmed the fertile volcanic soil... The main pagan cult in the city was the worship of Dionysus, the god of wine. More importantly, this church faced Jewish opposition similar to that encountered in Smyrna (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).”ⁱ

As we discuss the [realities](#) regarding this faithful church, I want to consider: [Philadelphia – The Church with the Open Door](#).

I. The Authority of the Church (7-8a) – *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;*^[8a] *I know thy works.* This church operated under the sovereign authority of the Lord. He was given the preeminence in every aspect of the church. Jesus is the Head of the church; He must be in complete control. We will never prosper if He isn't!

A. His Attributes – Jesus describes Himself as **holy**. He is once again declaring His sinless and pure character. Jesus was encouraging the believers in Philadelphia to be pure as He was pure. They dealt with sin and the attacks of Satan, as we do today, but Jesus, in His holiness, has the power to help us rise above this world and live according to His will. The liberals may not believe, but had Jesus not lived a sinless life, He couldn't have been an acceptable Sacrifice for our sin!

- He also described Himself as **true**, “*that which is genuine.*” He is the Christ; there is no other. The early believers were surrounded by false gods, but Jesus declared that He is the I AM.

- I serve the true and living God. Many are looking to all kinds of gods, (wealth, pleasure, power), but I am trusting in One that is true. What I have is real. Jesus plus nothing else secured my salvation. He alone is the source of our salvation and hope!

B. His Authority – Jesus declared that He had the key of David. He is referring to Old Testament prophecy, [Is.22:20-25](#). This is clearly a reference to Jesus. It speaks of the glory, the power, and the authority of God resting upon Jesus. He came as God in the flesh. He was set “[as a nail in a sure place](#).” He fulfilled the Father’s will, but after a time He was cut off, a picture of the cross. Jesus died there, but He still possesses the keys! He has the keys of hell and death, salvation, the door to eternal life, guarding our eternal security. Satan can’t destroy the redeemed!

- Jesus also speaks of opening and shutting doors. He is the authority in our lives. I am thankful for the doors He has opened, as well as, the doors He has closed. When Jesus opens a door, don’t hesitate, immediately accept His offer. On the other hand, don’t try to force open a door He has closed. We need the Lord to open the doors for our church. As He does, we must respond. We can’t open them ourselves. Good things come to those who wait. In His time, He will do what pleases Him!

C. His Awareness (8a) – [I know thy works](#). Jesus again revealed that He knew the works of the church. He knew the intents and desires of their hearts. This has been repeated many times, but we must not forget. If we are sincere, He knows. If we grow complacent, He knows. I firmly believe we will receive in direct proportion to our faith and commitment. His awareness ought to challenge us to work harder, live better, dream bigger, and pray longer!

II. The Ministry of the Church (8b-11) –The church may have been small in number, but they were giants in the faith. They possessed great potential in regard to Christ. Notice:

A. The Consideration (8b) – [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](#). Jesus wanted them to consider, once again, just who they were and whom they served. They were the church of the living God. He had opened doors of opportunity that no man could shut. They might not have had the political or financial influence of others, but God was going to use them in a mighty way for His glory.

- We may be small in number, but God can do extraordinary things with ordinary people. He can open doors that the world can’t close. Many in our day have rejected the truth for liberal

theology. We don't have the ear of the masses, but God can get their attention. Just remember to whom we belong and trust Him!

B. The Confrontation (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. Evidently Jesus was referring to local Jews who had rejected Him as Messiah. The church suffered persecution, but it would prevail.

- Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Those who live godly shall suffer persecution. If you stand for Jesus, you will be opposed. This world doesn't embrace the truth of the Word. We are viewed as a hindrance to progress. We shall prevail; we are the church! Those who have denied the truth will also face God. They too will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

C. The Consolation (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. Here we find a precious promise to God's people. To those who have endured and lived for Christ, they will be kept from the hour of temptation that shall come upon the world. Jesus guarantees deliverance from the horrors of the tribulation. This verse teaches that the church will escape the tribulation. The word **from** literally means "out of" or "away from." We shall be kept out of and away from the tribulation.

- To help us understand this better, notice Jesus says those tried will be those that dwell upon the earth – the earth dwellers. This phrase is found throughout Revelation. It refers to those who have their roots in this world, those who don't know Christ. The saved are **not** earth dwellers. We are called pilgrims and strangers. We are the body of Christ and He certainly isn't an earth dweller.

D. The Obligation (11) – Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Jesus could return at any moment. There will be no warning and no time for preparation when the trumpet sounds. We are to live as if we expect His return right now! We cannot conform to the ways of this world; we must hold fast to what we have in Christ.

- Now, letting man take our crown doesn't refer to losing one's salvation. It refers to the rewards that we might receive to lay at Jesus' feet. I certainly don't want to stand before my Lord, after all He did for me, without something to lay at His feet to honor Him! We are obligated to live

for Jesus as individuals. We are obligated to live for Him as a church, letting our light shine as a beacon of hope to a lost and dying world, unspotted from the world!

III. The Certainty of the Church (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. As with the others, Jesus closes this letter with words of hope for the future. This world isn't all there is. We can rejoice today because the saved share this same certainty.

A. A Stable Position – They will be made a pillar in the temple of God and they shall go out no more, (illus. the earthquakes and fleeing they endured being located on a geological fault line). The pillars of a building can't be removed without the building collapsing. The saved can't be removed from the body of Christ. This world is wicked, but we are on a firm foundation, never to be removed!

B. A Select People – Jesus will put the name of God, the name of the new Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ upon the redeemed. We will be identified as God's possession. Our eternal destination is already determined. Our ticket is already marked and paid in full, one way! We shall behold the risen Christ in all His glory. We shall praise His new, glorious name.

C. A Secure Promise – Jesus spoke of the New Jerusalem, the city of God, coming down out of heaven. If you are saved, that will be your eternal home! [Rev.21:2 – And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.](#) That glorious city awaits the children of God. It is there that Jesus will sit upon His throne while we worship and adore Him for the endless ages. That is home; we have a secure promise of heaven!

Conclusion: We need to be a Philadelphia type church. It ought to be our desire to live, work, and worship as they did. If we aren't careful, we can become like the others. I want Jesus to be pleased with us! If you need to rededicate your life to Him so that you can be like a Philadelphian, come. If you are lost and desire the promise of heaven, you certainly need to come.

ⁱ Duvall, J. S. (2014). [Revelation](#). (M. L. Strauss & J. H. Walton, Eds.) (pp. 70–71). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.