

Study Guide

The Lord's Word to His Church: Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

Chapter 3, verse 7-12. "To the messenger 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: '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.

Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say 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. 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.

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

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

It is a little church, as indicated by the fact, verse 8, that it has a little power. That is to say the power isn't minimal, but the size of the church is small. It's a little church in Philadelphia, in Asia Minor.

“To the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write:” This is a representative from that church that will carry back the book of Revelation, and in particular, this letter for that church.

“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. This is a description of the author that we don't see in that vision in chapter 1, but it fits this faithful church.

“He who is holy.” This can refer to no other than God. This can refer to no other than God. And it is to say then that Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church and the author of the letter, is God Himself.

Isaiah, Chapter 6, that God is declared **“holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.”** And we also know that in the gospel of John that we are told that that vision of God is Isaiah 6 was a vision of the Son of God. He is the Holy One. .

In **John 6,** the disciples said, **“He is the Holy One of God.”** Consistently, our Lord is identified as God, and therefore is the Holy One.

Mark, Chapter 1, “Jesus of Nazareth, have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” This is a common title for Messiah.

The Lord Jesus shares the holiness of God. He is God; He is the Holy One. He is the one of whom Peter writes, **“The Holy One who calls you. So be holy yourselves in all your behavior.”**

It is remarkable that He introduces Himself this way, and that there is no condemnation. He is true, and His truth is an absolute standard, and against that truth is measured every lie and it falls short. He is the Holy God who can't tolerate sin. He is the true God who has no place for error or falsehood, and still He does not rebuke this church.

To say He's the root of David means that He is – Christ is God, and He is the source of David. David calls Him Lord, and David also identifies Him as Son.

He has the key of David. What does that mean? He has the Messianic authority. In the line of David, He is the Messiah.

The key of David is the ultimate Messianic authority over all the royal riches of heaven. Jesus Christ then is the Holy One, the True One, and the one who has access to all the treasures of heaven, and who pours them out by His own sovereign will on His people. Sovereign authority: to open the riches of heaven to anyone.

“He opens – ” verse 7 says “ – and when He opens, no one will shut. And He shuts and no one opens.” What does that

mean? That means that He is the one who decides who enters the kingdom. He is the one who decides who enters the kingdom. He holds the keys.

Chapter 1, verse 18, He has the keys of death and Hades. “I am come that you might have life.” He is the one who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

So, it is the Lord Jesus, the Holy One, the True One, the one who dispenses all of heaven’s blessings, the one who opens the door of the kingdom, the door of salvation at His own sovereign choice. Only He does it. **“No man can come to the Father but by Me,”** He said. **“I am the door. I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** Without Christ, we cannot enter the kingdom. He alone provides entrance for us.

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. 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. 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.”

And that’s the second commendation: “You have a little power and have kept My word, have obeyed My word.” They were bound to the Scripture. They did not deviate from a

pattern of obedience to the Lord; they obeyed. This is the mark – we've seen it in **John 14 and 15**. This is a mark of a true believer: **"If you're Mine, you obey Me. If you're Mine, you obey Me. You have kept**

1 John "This is the acid test of a true Christian; a true Christian obeys his Lord." So, they were characterized by power and obedience. They were also characterized by loyalty: **"And have not denied My name."** That indicates to Me that there was some pressure for them to do that.

Chapter 14 of Revelation, and verse 12, "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." "You have not denied My name. You're true believers."

So, this is a church characterized by power, obedience, loyalty, and one more: endurance, endurance, perseverance. They were persevering. They were sustaining their commitment: **"You have kept the word – " verse 10 " – of My perseverance."** Another way to say that: **"You have kept My command to endure patiently"**

Verse 8. "I have put before you an open door which no one can shut. I'm giving you full access to the kingdom and no one can alter that. I'm giving you an open door to the kingdom."

They became a church that was able to usher others through that open door. This open door has overtones of gospel

opportunity, gospel witness, gospel preaching, evangelistic outreach.

There are many adversaries, but there is an open door.” The promise of an open door means that they were a place where people could come to enter the kingdom.

Now, the Lord promises them in **verse 9** a very significant promise: **“I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say 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.”**

What do you mean, “I will make you come and bow down – I’ll make them come and bow down at your feet”? That’s the posture of a humbled and defeated enemy. That’s the posture of a humbled and defeated enemy. That is precisely what that picture is indicating. “They are your adversaries, they are your enemies, they’re making life difficult for you, there is persecution: I will make them bow.”

And in the future at the end of the age, the Jews will believe: **“All Israel will be saved – ” Romans 11 “ – and they will come, and they will bow down and say, ‘Blessed are the feet of those who preach the gospel.’ “A blessed Gentile church will be used by God to provoke Israel to jealousy and to salvation,” Romans 11:13-14. “They will come to know that I, the Lord, have loved you.”**

Verse 10, a promise that is really remarkable: **“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, or because you have**

obeyed My command to endure patiently and faithfully – through the persecution, through the deprivation, through the difficulty – because you have endured, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.”

It would come on the whole world, and that may be from their perspective, their world – and the use of the word “world” is always limited to a context.

What is this? Something future: **“I will keep.”** **Something limited: “An hour of testing.”** It has a limitation: “Something designed to be a trial, a testing; something worldwide, the whole world.” Something inclusive: **“The whole world.”** Something that is coming on non-Christians: **“To test those who dwell on the earth.”** And that, by the way, **“those who dwell on the earth,”** is a phrase repeated in the book of Revelation about half a dozen times or more, and **always refers to unbelievers.**

Is this the Holy Spirit giving us a look down to the end of the history of redemption when a time of severe judgment comes on the earth, a time that the Bible calls the great tribulation, the tribulation, Daniel’s Seventieth Week; a time that is described to us starting in Revelation 6 through Revelation 18; a time that is described in sequences of sealed judgments, trumpet judgments, and bold judgments that come on the earth that are just devastating beyond comprehension? It’s about to come, not in the sense that it’s coming in days or weeks, but it’s next, it’s imminent, it’s

nearer every day – like our salvation, Romans 13, is nearer than when we believed.

The final test that comes on the whole world will not be for the faithful.”

We know we’ll be kept from the eternal wrath to come, **1 Thessalonians 1:10. “Jesus who rescues us from eternal wrath.”**

I don’t think we could say that our Lord means, “Because you have obeyed and persevered and endured, as a reward, I will throw you into the tribulation, I will make you go through the tribulation.” That doesn’t seem to be a blessing. **“I will keep you from the hour of testing, keep you from it.”** They’re promised deliverance. They’re promised exemption.

Unfaithful churches will experience judgment here and now, temporal judgment. We saw that in chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 3; the Lord speaks of judgment. But here He is saying, “There is coming a time on the whole world, and I will keep you from that.” The phrase in the Greek is *tre ek*, out of. It can’t be meaning that “I will protect you through it,” because the believers who live during that time are killed.

John 17:15 to the Father – I’ll just remind you of what He says. **“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”**

Commented [SH1]:

Same phrase: “Keep them from the evil one.” That doesn’t mean that He’s asking the Father to put us in the hands of the evil one and protect us there. He’s praying that the Father

keep us out of the hands of the evil one where the whole world lies.

The language here then leads us to believe that those who are part of the faithful church in the end will be kept out of, or out from that time of trial. This may be a look at that future because of the next statement in **verse 11: “I’m coming quickly. I’m coming quickly.”**

You’re not going through that final time of testing. I am coming quickly to take you out. Hold fast what you have so that no one will take your crown.” What does that mean, **“So that no one will do anything to cause you to lose your reward”?**

You can’t lose your salvation, but you can lose your reward. Yes, you can forfeit your heavenly reward. .

Second John 8 says, “Watch yourselves that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”

1st Thessalonians 4: “The trump will sound, the dead in Christ will rise and will be caught up into the air to meet the Lord.”

This “quickly coming” can’t be Revelation 19 because there’s no judgment.

So, there’s divine commendation and divine commitment, and then divine counsel, **verse 12: “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar. He who overcomes.”**

We know that by now, back to **1 John 5:5** he who overcomes: **“Who is he that overcomes, even our faith, the one who believes.”** This is just another way of saying, “He who is a true believer, who has overcome the world through faith in Christ.”

This is divine encouragement, divine comfort: **“I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.”**

Four eternal blessings are given here: **“I’ll make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore.”**

What does that mean? You’re going to live in heaven forever, that’s what it means – permanent, immovable place in heaven. **“An eternal inheritance –” 1 Peter 1 “ – that is undefiled, undiminished, unfading, reserved in heaven for you.”**

What does it mean to be a pillar? Pillars in great temples were dedicated to people. The pillar would have the name of a well-known or famous or honored person carved on the temple pillar. Our names will be carved, as it were, into the temple of heaven.

Secondly, **“I will write upon him the name of My God.”**

A pillar in that temple will have your name on it, and God will write His name on you. .

And then we will have also the name of the city of My God. We will have a pillar with our name on it that we are a

permanent citizen of heaven. God will put His name on us. We belong to Him, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem that comes down from God out of heaven, which indicates our everlasting citizenship. Forever we are citizens with all rights and privileges to the Eternal City.

And He will write on us, **“My new name”**. What could that name be? Well, when He died, the Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him a name that is above every name, the name Lord.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

