

The Seven Letters from Jesus
Letter #6 – Sent to the Church of Philadelphia
Revelation 3:7-13 (5/31/09 AM)

The city of Philadelphia was in a strategic location. It was founded by a man named Attalus who was the king of Pergamos. He had a usual love for his brother and was given the nickname, Philadelphia, which means “brotherly love”. The city was known as “The Gateway to the East.” It was an important commercial stop on a major trade route called “The Imperial Road”. It was established as a missionary city to bring Greek culture and influence to that area and beyond. It was effective in doing so. The city was known as “Little Athens” because of its many temples. The city however sat on a geological fault line and suffered from severe earthquakes.

All that we know about this church is found here in this passage. This church and the suffering church of Smyrna are the only two out of the seven that receive no rebuke from the Lord Jesus. This was a great church.

The Church of Philadelphia Is Symbolic of the Faithful Church

1. The Identification of the Lord Jesus (7)

Not Part of the Vision from Chapter 1

This description perfectly fits this church.

• **Christ’s claim to Deity**

“These things says He who is holy, He who is true”

Both holiness and truth are applied to God throughout the Bible. Holiness is God’s complete separateness from sin.

Isaiah 6:3, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”

Mark 1:23-24, Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!"

The word for truth means that which is genuine and authentic.

1 John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

Jesus Christ Who is Holy and True has no rebuke for this congregation.

No Church Can Be Perfect but Every Church Could Be Approved

• **Christ’s claim to authority**

“He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”

In the Bible keys stand for authority. Whoever has the key has the control. In chapter 1 Jesus was shown to have absolute authority over life and death.

1:18, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

The “key of David” is a reference to His messianic authority. Jesus determines who enters the kingdom and who is shut out.

John 14:6, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 3:3, Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Matthew 25:34, Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"

Jesus Christ Is the Only Way to Eternal Life

2. The Commendation from the Lord Jesus (8)

This Is a Congregation Christ Can Use

“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength”

The word strength is the word *dunamis* which means power, here it is a reference to spiritual power. This most likely indicates that they are a small congregation having an impact upon their city. God was using them to see lives changed through the power of the Gospel.

- **In the New Testament an open door symbolizes opportunity**

2 Corinthians 2:12, “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord”

The Lord Jesus was providing them opportunities for ministry within the city of Philadelphia and beyond. Philadelphia now became a missionary city for the Gospel instead of Greek culture. If these churches represent stages of church history we are living in the age of Philadelphia. We must take advantage of the opportunities.

When God Opens a Door of Ministry We Must Work When He Shuts a Door We Must Wait

- **The opportunity came because of their testimony**

“...have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”

The word “kept” means to guard from loss or injury by keeping an eye on something. This church preached and taught God’s Word. They obeyed what they were taught. They proclaimed Christ as Lord crucified and risen. They were living what the church of Sardis had lost.

Titus 1:9, “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

Jesus Is Not Impressed with the Size of Our Ministry but with the Steadfastness of Our Testimony

3. The Promises of the Lord Jesus (9-13)

The Most Promises Given by Jesus

Obedience brings blessing.

- **Their vindication before their adversaries**

(9) “Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie — indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”

These Jews were physically descended from Abraham but not spiritually Abraham’s children. There are two possibilities and probably both are true. One is that many of these unbelieving Jews would come to confess Christ as their Messiah and Savior. Church history has seen this occur throughout the church age. This also may be a reference to future events. During the Tribulation the nation of Israel will turn to Jesus. Jesus Christ will be acknowledged by all men one day and His true servants will be vindicated.

Romans 11:25-26, “blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob”

The Lord Will One Day Declare Us His Children before All Men, We Are to Declare Him as Our Lord Today before All Men

- **Their protection from the time of trial**

(10) “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

Jesus commends them for their perseverance. The word means patient continuance, endurance. This event is a **future worldwide event** “come upon the whole word”. This time of trial is vividly described in chapters 6-19. It is also a **world focused event** “to test those who dwell on the earth”. The word “dwell” means to be at home. In Revelation these earth dwellers are the unbelievers.

(13:8) “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Some will respond to the test by repenting and trusting Christ as their savior, most of whom will be martyred. Most will reject Christ and be destroyed. The church is not included in this event.

The word “from” is *ek* which means “out of” not “through” as some teachers claim.

1 Thessalonians 1:10, “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

This Is a Promise to the Whole Church

- **Their anticipation of Christ’s return**

(11) “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

Quickly depicts immanency that Jesus could return at any moment. With the promise of His return Jesus gives them an exhortation. The crown here is eternal life. All true believers will persevere to the end. God gives them this ability through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The other aspect is that crowns represent rewards for faithful service.

2 John 8, “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.”

From our human viewpoint the fact of Christ’s imminent return should motivate us to holy living.

1 John 3:2-3, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

This Is a Purifying Promise

- **Their preservation in the Eternal Kingdom**

(12) “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 I will write on him My new name.”

After an earthquake in Philadelphia the only thing standing was mostly pillars. Pillars symbolize permanency “he shall go no more out”. People fled the city during an earthquake. Pillars also indicated honor. In ancient times important people would erect pillars with their name inscribed upon them. Pillars would be carved to represent certain deities. The writing of our name shows that we belong to God and that we have eternal citizenship in His Kingdom.

“And I will write on him My new name.”

There is a new name by which we will call our Savior that we do not know yet. When we see Him in His glory we will know what that name is.

Nothing We Must Endure In this Life Will Compare to what Awaits Us in the Kingdom