

Letters from Jesus: Philadelphia!

Revelation 3:7-13

The city of Philadelphia almost became the capital of the United States. It's true and the Turkey almost became the National bird. Can you imagine that? I guess we would have then been eating Eagle for Thanksgiving. Fortunately, we aren't living in that alternate history.

Today we are looking at the 6th letter from Jesus in Revelation, written to the church in Philadelphia in Asia Minor.

This church, like the one in Smyrna are the only two churches that Jesus does not rebuke for any reason.

I. Correspondent, church & city!

Revelation 3:7, "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open."

Jesus here reveals 4 things about Himself here:

1. He is Holy!
2. He is True!
3. He has the key of David!

This symbolizes the messianic office. The word 'key' in Scripture always represents authority and, in this case, it demonstrates Jesus' sovereignty. The key holder determines who will enter the kingdom.

4. He opens & shuts!

What Jesus opens remains open and what He shuts remains shut unless Jesus changes it. This demonstrates Jesus' omnipotence, His power over all things.

The city of Philadelphia was in the Hermus valley about 30 miles from Sardis.

It was founded in 189 BC by either King Eumenes of Pergamum or his brother Attalus II. Attalus' nickname was Philadelphus which means "brother lover" reflecting his loyalty to his brother Eumenes.

Philadelphia was built to be a center for Greek culture and language which went so well that by 19 AD Greek had become the dominant language of the region.

II. Commendation

Revelation 3:8-11a, “I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. 11 I am coming soon.”

Jesus compliments the church for 4 things. They are:

1. Little strength!

He is not saying they are weak, rather the opposite. He is saying that even though you are small in number you are powerful in impact.

1 Corinthians 12:10, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

How often do you feel outnumbered or weak? We all have known that feeling, haven’t we? It’s then that God is strong. The church in Philadelphia understood this.

2. Obedience!

They kept the word! This attitude reflects the same attitude Job had in the middle of his testing.

Job 23:12, “I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.”

How are you doing at keeping the word in your walk with Jesus? Is there something you are doing that you know is wrong? Stop! Is there something you know you should be doing but you just haven’t started doing it? Start, just do it!

3. Didn’t deny His name!

Under pressure from society, they didn’t buckle. They stayed faithful to Jesus and didn’t deny Him. How do you do at work or with family when faith comes up in the discussion? Do you hide behind a partition? Do you slip into the next room?

The church in Philadelphia stood strong with Jesus!

4. Kept the word of His perseverance!

They kept His command to endure patiently. They didn't run when the pressure came. When the world pressures you to go along with its views on sexuality, do you go along? Or do you lean into Scriptural truth?

When you haven't read your Bible all day and you want to go to bed, do you dig deep to do a little reading or do you tell yourself, "I'll read tomorrow?"

Because of these 4 things Jesus promises a few things to the church in Philadelphia.

First, He promises an open door that no one can shut. This means that their salvation is secure. No one can remove it. The open door is the entrance into the kingdom. The open door also promises opportunities to serve and to proclaim the gospel.

Are you looking for those opportunities to serve and to tell people about Jesus? He has promised you these open doors, will you take them?

Second, He promises us that the Synagogue of Satan will bow at their feet. In their culture to bow at someone's feet meant that the one bowing was

admitting total defeat and submission. This promise meant that their enemies would be utterly defeated.

The third promise was that they would be protected from the hour of testing.

This is very interesting as you dig into its meaning. I believe that what Jesus is promising here is protection from the terrible judgements that will come in the tribulation period.

The coming testing is said to include the inhabitants of all the earth, not just those in Philadelphia.

I believe this protection promise supports either a pretribulation or pre-wrath rapture of the church.

III. Concern!

There is none!

IV. Command

Revelation 3:11b, "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

You have something incredibly valuable, don't let go of it!

Colossians 1:22-23, "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present

you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”

Paul is telling the Colossians the same thing here, hold on, don't leave your hope in the gospel.

John addresses the same thing in 1 John and shows us that some who are claiming Christ at one point only to later deny Him never were really believers. Look at:

1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

To be secure in Christ you must have at some point put your complete trust in Him. Some call this being born again. Others describe it as having a personal relationship with Jesus. No matter what you call it, each one of us must personally declare Jesus as Lord to be saved.

Without this personal confession and turning away from sin we could be like one of those John described as one who was with us but left because we never really belonged to Jesus. Don't let that be you.

Don't miss out on the crown Jesus is talking about here, the crown of life. What a tragic loss it would be to live your life having heard of the good news but never responding to it.

V. Counsel!

Revelation 3:12-13, “The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. 13 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Jesus describes 4 eternal blessings for those who overcome. They are:

1. Make us a pillar in the temple!

What Jesus means here is that we will have an eternal place of honor in God's temple. Imagine that!

2. He will write God's name on us!

Do you remember writing your name on something? When I get a new book the first thing I do is open to the first page and I write my name and the date on it. I am making it my own. That is what God does with us when we declare Him our God.

We now belong to Him!

3. He writes the name of God's city on us!

Not only do we belong to God, but we also now have citizenship in God's eternal city. We are citizens of New Jerusalem.

4. He writes Jesus' name on us!

This means we receive the fullness of Christ.

John elaborates on this in:

1 John 3:2, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

If that doesn't stir your soul...

We will see Him face to face and in that moment we will have full realization of who Jesus is.