

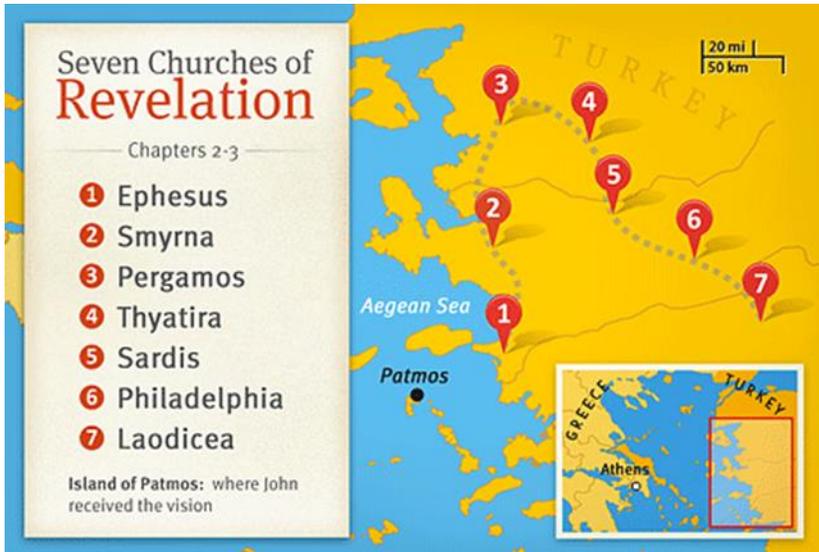


World Christian Fellowship

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Seven Churches Philadelphia – Faithful Church

Revelation 3:7-13, *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’:⁸ “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, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.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.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.¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.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.¹³ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’*



There is no perfect church and there is no perfect Christian. Church is a collection of imperfect Christians and, therefore, it is imperfect.

There is no perfect pastor. We are all imperfect. We all fall short of the absolute standard of holiness that God has set.

But having said that there is no perfect Christian, or a perfect pastor, or a perfect church; and none of us can be everything that the Lord desires, nor collectively can we be completely the church that He desires. But it is still possible to be faithful, obedient, and diligent to please the Lord as a congregation.

It is possible to be a church that the Lord blesses because that church is genuinely faithful to Him. This is what we see with the church at Philadelphia.

It is a little church that it has a little power according to Verse 8. The size of the church is small. It's a little church in Philadelphia, in Asia Minor.

This church receives a letter from the Lord Jesus, like the church at Smyrna,

- ✓ there are no warnings,
- ✓ there are no condemnations,
- ✓ there are no threats, and
- ✓ there are no judgments.

A church that is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia was 30 miles southeast of Sardis in Asia Minor. It was founded after Attalus, the king of Pergamum in 189, came to that area.

Attalus, was nicknamed Philadelphia because he was known as having a special love for his brother, and that became the name of the city which he founded. It was rich in agriculture, which was assisted by volcanic ash.

The city stood on a hill above a long valley. The volcanic ash indicates that there was volcanic action in the area and also earthquakes.

The city was a hub of Greco-Asiatic civilization because it was kind of on the line between Greece in the West and Asia in the East.

They spoke the language called Lydian, and it was gone by about 19 A.D. This city was significant in really spreading the Greek language and replacing the language of the Lydian region. It pushed Greek culture backwards, into the East. It was a city that originally was on the trade route to the East. It was an imperial road, an imperial road stop in the first century A.D. At one time, one of the greatest trade routes ran through this city east and west.

In A.D. 17, a powerful earthquake destroyed 12 cities in the area, including Sardis and Philadelphia. Again in 60 A.D., an earthquake destroyed Laodicea. All of them were in this area where there were active volcanos.

The emperor, the Caesar Tiberius, helped rebuild Philadelphia. So, a monument was made to him and he was worshipped there.

Church at Philadelphia

We don't know anything about the church.

Acts 19:10, *And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

Because the gospel extended out of Ephesus into all of Asia Minor, the church at Philadelphia was founded.

A few years after John wrote the revelation at the end of the first century, the early church father Ignatius passed through Philadelphia on his way to martyrdom in Rome.

Some of the believers from Philadelphia were martyred with Polycarp at Smyrna.

The church lasted in Philadelphia for centuries, standing firm, until the whole region was overrun by the Muslims in the fourteenth century.

Author of the Letter:

V7, *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:*

The first description of the author that is not drawn from the vision in Revelation chapter 1.

He who is holy

This can refer to no other than God.

Isaiah 6:3, *And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"*

The gospel of John that vision of God was a vision of the Son of God. He is the Holy One.

John 6:69, *Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Revelation 4:8, *The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

God is holy, and Christ is holy as well. So here we find that the writer is introduced as "the One who is holy," and that, of course, is God; and since Christ is God, it refers to Him.

Mark 1:24, *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!"*

This is a common title for Messiah.

The Lord Jesus shares the holiness of God. He is God; He is the Holy One.

1 Peter 1:15-16, *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”*

This could be a very frightening introduction because holiness cannot tolerate sin. Holiness cannot look upon iniquity and look upon evil and yet, the Holy One introduces Himself as such, and gives no rebuke, and no threat, and no warning, and no condemnation, and no judgment on this church. It is the Holy One who speaks well of this church.

V7, *He who is true*

Revelation 6:10, *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*

Two magnificent attributes of God’s absolute character: Holiness and Truth.

He is the true God, and Jesus is God. He is the holy and genuine God in person. He is perfect in His righteousness, and He is true in His character and all that He says.

Jesus 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 false.

Still He does not rebuke this church.

V 7, He who has the key of David,

He is called the root of David a couple of times in the book of Revelation. Here, He possesses the key of David.

To say He is the root of David means that He is, Christ is God. 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 is the emblem of authority, ultimate control and sovereignty.

Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, who had the key to all the treasures of the king, he has authority over the royal treasury. He can open its riches and disperse them and dispense them.

Isaiah 22:20-22, *Then it shall be in that day, That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; ²¹ I will clothe him with your robe And strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem And to the house of Judah. ²² The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.*

The key of David then 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.

Jesus, who pours them out by His own sovereign will on His people. Sovereign authority to open the riches of heaven to anyone.

The one who writes is holy and still does not condemn.

The one who writes is true and still does not condemn.

The one who writes is sovereign and still does not lock up any of heaven's blessings.

He is the root of David, the one who brought David into existence. He is the offspring of David, born in the line of David.

He is the Anointed King, the Messiah. He has all the authority to dispense all of heaven's blessings.

V7, *He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens*”:

What does that mean?

Jesus is the one who decides who enters the kingdom.
He holds the keys.

Revelation 1:18, *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of ^UHades and of Death.*

- ✓ Jesus has the key to hell.
- ✓ Jesus has the key to heaven.

Jesus is the one who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

So, it is the Lord Jesus the author.

- 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.

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.*

Without Christ, we cannot enter the kingdom. He alone provides entrance for us.

Commendation

V 8-10, *“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, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 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. 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.*

He says to those in Philadelphia, “I have put before you an open door which no one can shut. I’ve opened the kingdom to you. I’ve given you access to everything in the kingdom.” The exact emphasis of this statement is to affirm our Lord’s grace toward these true believers.

Philadelphia church has

- nothing to rebuke,
- nothing to condemn,
- nothing to chasten them about,

- nothing to warn them about,
- nothing at all for which they should be threatened with judgement.

That is encouraging because they weren't a perfect church. But they were a true church and they were a faithful church.

Lord's blessing on a faithful church.

Lord opens the doors to the kingdom and gives access to all its treasures.

1. You have a little power.

A small group of people. Their power was small because they were few. It was not a sin issue that limited their power. It was not a Holy Spirit issue that limited their power. They had spiritual power, but evidently, they were not very large.

Lord chooses the poor, the lowly, undistinguished, the nobodies, and the nothings. A little power, like a grain of mustard seed, can move mountains. Spiritual power was flowing in that small church. They were true worshippers and true lovers of Christ.

2. Kept My Commandments

They were bound to the Scripture. They did not deviate from a pattern of obedience to the Lord.

This is the mark what the Lord Jesus spoke in the upper and the garden before His arrest in John chapters 14 and 15.

John 14:15, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

3. Loyalty

They were also characterized by loyalty.

"And have not denied My name."

That indicates to us that there was some pressure for them to do that.

The church at Pergamum, where Satan's throne.

Revelation 2:13, *"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."*

This church was loyal to our Lord.

They did not fold under the pressure of persecution.

They did not leave their first love.

They did not absorb the world.

They did not tolerate sin.

Revelation 14:12, *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

Those who endure in faith to the end are those who are genuine. They were true to the Lord Jesus.

4. Perseverance.

They were persevering. They were sustaining their commitment.

They have kept My command to endure patiently.

There was persecution and we would expect that every faithful church will be persecuted. The Lord told them they were going to be hated by the world.

They were going to be persecuted,
They were going to be mistreated by Jews,
They were going to be mistreated by Gentiles.

This is going to be life for a Christian. But they had kept the command of the Lord to endure patiently. He requires that of His own.

Matthew 10:22, *And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved*

Matthew 24:13, *But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

The requirement was to endure patiently to the end!

Revelation 1:9, *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Through trials and persecution, these faithful Christians patiently took it all and never wavered in their commitment to Christ.

This is the true church, the faithful church.

Not perfect, but faithful.

There are churches like that today!

I would like to believe with all my heart that our church is a faithful church!!

Commitment

V8, *See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;*

Jesus is saying that I AM giving you full access to the kingdom and no one can alter that.

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.

Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 2, Colossians 4.

That little church no doubt had an open door that those passing through that town on that trade route, and those who lived in that town, were introduced to, and some of them were ushered through those doors by the grace of God into the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 16:9, *For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

V9, *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.*

In Philadelphia there was a Jewish population large enough to have a local Jewish synagogue.

This synagogue was occupied by Jews who said they were Jews but are not.

What does that mean?

Romans 2:28-29, *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

They are not true Jews. They are a synagogue of Satan. They are not led by God; they are led by Satan.

John 8:44,

Jesus said to the leaders of Israel, “You are of your father, the devil.”

They were Jews, claiming to be Jews, but they were not true Jews either. Their father was not God but Satan. No doubt this Jewish group of Jews who were not true Jews, that constituted this synagogue under the power of Satan, had been attacking this small group.

Persecution was coming from the Jews. Lord Jesus told them while He was speaking to His disciples.

- They are not true sons of God.
- They are not true sons of Abraham.
- They may be Jews genetically, legally, ceremonially, but they are not Jews spiritually.

The church was being hit by their hostility and this is what was happening in Smyrna.

Revelation 2:9, *“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

In Smyrna, it was this fierce persecution from the Jews that God used to purify that church. That is the only other church that is never condemned in these seven letters.

Persecution at the hands of Jewish people who hate the gospel and are really a synagogue of Satan.

The Lord makes an amazing promise: “I will make them come and bow down at your feet and make them know that I have loved you.”

Jewish people from a synagogue bowing down to Gentiles and learning that it is the Gentiles that the Lord God loves.

Bowing down is a posture of a humbled and defeated enemy. That is precisely what that picture is indicating.

Jesus says that I will make them bow.

Isaiah 45:14, *Thus says the Lord: "The labor of Egypt and merchandise of Cush And of the Sabeans, men of stature, Shall come over to you, and they shall be yours; They shall walk behind you, They shall come over in chains; And they shall bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, 'Surely God is in you, And there is no other; There is no other God.' "*
¹⁵ Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Saviour! ¹⁶ They shall be ashamed And also disgraced, all of them; They shall go in confusion together, Who are makers of idols.

This is a humiliation.

Isaiah 49:23, *Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, And lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."*

Isaiah 60:14, *Also the sons of those who afflicted you Shall come bowing to you, And all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you The City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

Gentiles who are the church are going to have Jews bow to them. Gentile rulers had always tried to make the Jews bow but here, the Jews do the bowing.

What does this mean?

Salvation came to Jews in Philadelphia. The door was open to the kingdom there, which means they were preaching the gospel, and Christ, the way into the kingdom; and God graciously saved their persecutors, the very Jews that persecuted them.

God has been saving Jews and Gentiles in the history and in the future at the end of the age, the Jews will believe.

Romans 11:13-14, *For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.*

Romans 11:26-27, *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; ²⁷For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."*

It is very hard for Jews to accept that!

Jonah, hard to accept Gentile salvation. The Jews throughout church history, and finally in the end, will see the blessing of

God has been on the church. They will see that God has loved us.

V10, *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.*

Nothing that we can point to in history that is that vast and sweeping that happens.

It could be a historical illusion to some other event that occurred, some natural disaster, some war, some elevated persecution. Persecution, of course, came in huge waves. But we don't have any historical event to point to.

It would come on the whole world, and that may be from their perspective, their world, Asia minor.

If it was something temporal that happened in history, that little church was spared. But there may be something more here because the language is very, very sweeping.

What is this hour of testing?

It doesn't sound like a simple present distress in the city of Philadelphia.

- It's not a permanent or eternal trial.
- It doesn't seem to be local.

- It doesn't seem to be partial.
- It comes on everybody on the earth, all the unbelievers, but not the faithful church.

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?

Is it a time that the Bible calls the great tribulation, Daniel's Seventieth Week?

Is it a time that is described to us starting in Revelation 6 through Revelation 18?

Is it 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?

Whatever it may be but our Lord saying then to the church, *"I will keep you from the hour of testing. The present trouble will be enough. The final test that comes on the whole world will not be for the faithful."*

Will the church not go through that final test?

This passage helps us to understand the pretribulation rapture!

We understand we all know very well that we will be kept from the eternal wrath to come.

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.*

“Because you have obeyed and endured, as a reward, I will throw you into the tribulation and 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 are promised deliverance.

The phrase in the Greek is **‘tre ek’**, meaning ‘out of’ not ‘through it’

V 11, *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*

“I am coming quickly”

To the church at **Ephesus**,
Revelation 2:5, *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.*

To the church at **Pergamum**,

Revelation 2:16, *Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

To the church at **Sardis**,

Revelation 3:3, *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

In the case of those churches, Jesus said that He is coming to judge them!

But here Jesus is saying that they are not going through that final time of testing. So, He is coming quickly to take them out.

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

You can't lose your salvation, but you can lose your reward.

You can forfeit your heavenly reward. You can accumulate heavenly reward as a faithful believer. You can be obedient to the Lord and laying up treasure in heaven.

2 John 1:8, *Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.*

Counsel

V 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.*

Who is an overcomer?

1 John 5:4-5, *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Eternal blessing. Four eternal blessings are given here.

- 1. “I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more”**

You are going to live in heaven forever!

Permanent and immovable place in heaven.

1 Peter 1:4-5, *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

The church used to earthquakes which devastated their world, this was a promise. Maybe their homes would be destroyed, maybe their possessions would be devastated but there was an unshakable, immovable place for them in God's temple in heaven.

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 honoured person carved on the temple pillar.

Our names will be carved, as it were, into the temple of heaven.

2. I will write on him the name of My God

It is of possession, or ownership

There is going to be a temple in heaven, a pillar in that temple will have your name on it, and God will write His name on you. It is incredibly gracious!

We will be forever God's, forever honoured.

3. 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.

4. I will write on him My new name

What could that name be?

When Jesus died, the Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him a name that is above every name!
The name Lord!

Whatever that name is, be it Lord or a name we have never heard, it will be the name that encompasses the fullness of His eternal majesty.

Conclusion:

This is a little church with power,

- ✓ Loyal,
- ✓ Obedience,
- ✓ Endurance, and
- ✓ Faithfulness.

The Lord threw the heaven doors open and made the riches of the kingdom available.

Little church was used by God to bring people to those open doors, and the Spirit of God ushered them into the kingdom.

This church had such an evangelistic impact that even its Jewish persecutors bowed down and embraced the gospel they once persecuted.

Promised that they will escape the temporal and eternal tribulations.

The Lord will come to reward them.

Give them a pillar with their name on it in the heavenly temple,

To write the name of God on them,

To write the name of the city, indicating their citizenship,

To write the new name of Christ.

- ✓ We are God's,
- ✓ We are Christ's,
- ✓ We are citizens of heaven,
- ✓ We will be forever honoured!