

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 9 – The Things Which Are: The Seven Churches – Philadelphia

November 1, 2016

### PHILADELPHIA/THE FAITHFUL CHURCH

#### Revelation 3:7-13 (STAND)

*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”:<sup>8</sup> “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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.<sup>12</sup> 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.*

<sup>13</sup> *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

The city of Philadelphia was founded in 140 BC by King Attalus of Pergamus. The city was named Philadelphia, *brotherly love*, because of the King’s love for his brother. Philadelphia was built on a volcanic mountain range (900 ft. high) and, thus, experienced many earthquakes. In 17 AD an earthquake destroyed Philadelphia. It was rebuilt by the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Dionysus was the major pagan god. In the fifth century, the city was nicknamed “Little Athens” because of its many festivals and pagan cults.

Regarding the church in Philadelphia, there is no information in Scripture other than what we read in this letter. It may have been founded due to the effective ministry in Ephesus – the Word of God spreading throughout Asia Minor (Acts 19:10 - *all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks*) Perhaps when Ephesus was being planted and strengthened in the three years of the ministry of Paul, some people left there and went to this city of Philadelphia, planted a church.

How does Jesus describe Himself to John in His message to the church in Philadelphia? Up until this letter, every description in the other letters has been taken from Revelation chapter 1. In the message to the church at Philadelphia we read a unique description that fits this faithful church.

*These things says He who is holy,*

He Who is holy. The holiness of God is the subject of great angelic praise throughout Scripture (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). We find this title for God in many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah 40:25; Isa. 43:15; Psa.16:10; Hab. 3:3. All those in the spiritual realm, even the demons, recognize this attribute of Jesus. We read in the Gospels that there was a man in a synagogue with an unclean spirit – a demon. And, that demon cried out, “*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!*” (Mark 1:24) How very sad that mankind, for the most part, did not acknowledge the Son of God, during His public ministry on earth, as holy and instead called for a murderer, Barabbas, to be pardoned from crucifixion in place of the Holy Son of God!

Luke 1:35 - *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.* Jesus, in identifying Himself as the holy One, is proclaiming, “I am God.” And, this One Who is holy does not rebuke this church. He gives no condemnation to the church in Philadelphia.

Jesus then describes Himself as *He who is true*. He Who is holy is true. God cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:4; Heb. 6:18; Tit. 1:2)

Rev. 6:10 – Tribulation saints, people who will come to faith during the Tribulation and who will be martyred, will cry out to God, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?* John 14:6 – Jesus is *the way, the truth, and the life*.

*He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.* We’re looking at someone Who has authority. What does the key of David unlock? Jesus will sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years during the Millennial Kingdom. God promised David a kingdom (II Sam. 7:16 - *And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you, your throne shall be established forever*) Could the key of David unlock the kingdom? Jesus not only receives the kingdom from the Father (Dan. 7:14), He also establishes the Kingdom by giving it to the saints (Dan. 7:27) who rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6). Entrance into eternal life is only through our sovereign Lord Jesus.

*I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;* Because of their works, which are not condemned or criticized, He has set before them an open door. Might this open door speak of evangelistic opportunities? We see a marvelous opportunity regarding sharing the Gospel in verse 9. What are their “works” and why is Jesus setting before them this door? Let’s look at the characteristics of this church that Jesus sets forth...

*for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name*  
*strength – du-na-mes – power - inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. When we come to know the Lord, we have a new nature.*

II Pet. 1:3-4 - *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,<sup>4</sup> by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature,*

Their power is described as “little”. Perhaps they’re a bit frail. Possibly they are weakened by the world. What did Paul revel in? His weaknesses... II Cor. 12:9 - *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

*...have kept my word....* The people within the church in Philadelphia were obedient. John 15:9-10 - *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide (remain; stay) in My love.<sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.*

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

*... and have not denied My name* In this Christ-denying culture/society, they proclaimed Jesus’ name. These believers in Philadelphia were committed to Jesus. To Whom/whom are we committed?

Jump to v. 10 – *Because you have kept My command to persevere....* To endure patiently is the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.

Because these believers have a little power, have kept His word and not denied His name...He has put before them an open door that no one can shut. It’s going to remain open. What does this mean? Paul used the open door image:

I Cor. 16:9 - *For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.* Paul spoke about freedom in proclaiming the gospel!

II Cor. 2:12 - *Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,*

Col. 4:2-3 - *Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;<sup>3</sup> meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ*

What might this opportunity for evangelism be?

*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.<sup>9</sup> 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.* GOD will cause the Jewish people in Philadelphia who are seemingly persecuting the believers in the city to acknowledge God’s love for the Gentiles. It appears that the Jewish people will come to the believers and worship before them.

The worship would not be to the believers in Philadelphia but before them in recognition that God has loved the overcomers in Philadelphia. This evangelistic door that Jesus will open concerns reaching Jewish people who had been hostile to the Gospel. The Apostle Paul had persecuted the Church/believers. After his coming to faith in Jesus, Paul preached the Gospel and worshipped God with Gentile believers. The Apostle Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles!

Is this significant? Rom. 11:11 – salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke the Jew to jealousy. Rom. 11:5 - *Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* The “remnant” in Scripture - Jewish believers (Isa. 1:9; Isa. 6....) At the end of the Tribulation we see the nation of Israel coming to know Jesus because God will pour His Spirit down on them (Zech. 12:10ff).

*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.*

- We see that the hour of trial is in the future
- The hour of trial is a certainty
- The time frame is limited – it’s an “hour”
- It’s GLOBAL
- It is to test those who dwell upon the earth.

“hour of trial”

*I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come*

This “hour of trial” is expected; it’s anticipated. This “hour of trial” is prophesied in the OT:

Dan. 9:27 - *Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate*

Dan. 12:1 - *...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation....*

Jer. 30:7 - *Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.* Jacob’s name was changed to *Israel*.

This hour is the Tribulation – the seven-year period during which time God’s wrath will be unleashed upon the world before Jesus’ physical Second Coming. The rebellious world is judged and Israel is purged during the Tribulation. I’m suggesting that believers will not go through this period of God’s wrath. In speaking to believers, the Apostle Paul said in I Thess. 5:9 - *God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

There is debate over the meaning of Rev. 3:10. The debate centers on whether *from* in the verse means “out of,” “through,” or “in.” Some teach that God will keep believers from the hour of trial, i.e. removing them the earth before the Tribulation. Some teach

that God will protect believers in/through the midst of God's judgments being unleashed, i.e. not removing them the earth during the Tribulation.

The view that believers will go through (be in) the Tribulation is based on Scripture where God's people are protected in the midst of God's judgment.

Gen. 7:13 - *On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark.*

(YET, you need to know that God's instructions for the construction of the ark includes covering the ark, inside and outside, with pitch. The Hebrew word for pitch is kafar which means to cover, to purge, to make atonement, to make reconciliation! And, as we picture the ark, we see the protection FROM the universal flood [NOT in and through the flood]– it is lifted above the flood waters!)

Ex. 12:13 - *Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

Dan. 3:19-20 - *Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.<sup>20</sup> And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*

Proponents of being kept *from* point to passages that tell us of believers being removed prior to God's judgment:

Gen. 5:24 – before the universal flood that came upon the earth as a judgment against man's rebellion/sin - *And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Gen. 19:21-24 – *And he said to him (God said to Lot), "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar<sup>22</sup> Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there. The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.<sup>24</sup> Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.*

John 16:33 - *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

Phil. 3:10 - *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

Rev. 2:10 - *Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

The letter to the church in Smyrna included Jesus' message that they, the believers, would suffer persecution – tribulation for ten days.

Both models of protection for believers are found in the Scripture. Saints (OT and NT and Tribulation Saints) occupy different roles in history. There are different situations with regard to what God is doing in their midst.

The Gk. for "keep" is *tereo* which means to guard. It's followed by the preposition, *ek*, which means "out of." Regarding believers being kept "through" the hour of trial, please

note that the Gk. for “through,” is *dia*. *Dia* is not used in this verse. Regarding believers being kept “in” the hour of trial, please note that the Gk. for “in,” is *en*. *En* is not used in this verse.

What about all the people who are martyred during the Tribulation? They weren’t kept from the hour of trial. And, that’s a good question; that’s a good statement. Remember, we are studying the messages of Jesus to the seven CHURCHES!

Those who are martyred during the Tribulation are not part of the Church. They are known as Tribulation saints. Rev. 7:9 describes them as a “great multitude which no man could number.”

Rev. 13:7 - *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*

Rev. 20:4 - *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

The reference to being kept from the hour of trial is for the Church. Jesus’ message in Revelation 2 and 3 is to the seven churches.

The hour of trial “...shall come upon the whole world”

We understand this trial to come upon the entire globe.

Matt. 24:14 – Jesus, in telling the disciples what will transpire during the Tribulation, said *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

Luke 21:26 – we read Jesus’ words - *men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Rev. 12:9 - *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

Rev. 16:14 - *For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

Mark 13:19 - *For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. The verbiage since the beginning of the creation speaks most definitely of a global scope.*

“those who dwell upon the earth”:

Isa. 26:21 – in speaking of the coming judgment – in the future – God says, *For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity....*

Rev. 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?”* These are the

Tribulation saints who have been martyred. Non-believers killed them. These non-believers are described as those who dwell on the earth.

Rev. 8:13 - *And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"*

Rev. 11:10 - *And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.*

Rev. 13:8 - the antichrist will be worshipped during the Tribulation: *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.*

Rev. 13:12 - regarding the false prophet: *he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

Rev. 14:6 - *Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—*

*Behold, I am coming quickly!*

Fix yourself on the truth that Jesus' coming is in process, it's at any moment, it's imminent! (See notes on Week 1 and Week 2)

Rev. 22:7 - *Behold, I am coming quickly*

Rev. 22:12 - *And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me*

Rev. 22:20a - *Surely I am coming quickly.*

Rev. 22:20b - *Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

Jesus is coming for His Church – for the body of Christ. He's coming to take us out of the hour of trial.

*Hold fast what you have*

Present tense imperative: "be continually holding fast!"

Remain faithful, obedient. It is GOD Who keeps believers by His power (I Pet. 1:5). HE gives us His persevering faith! Being kept is proof that we truly belong to Jesus!

*that no one may take your crown*

A crown speaks of victory. Five heavenly crowns are mentioned in the NT that will be awarded to believers: the imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life.

*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God,* Jesus is promising the believers in the church in Philadelphia, who are overcomers, that He will make those individual believers a pillar in the temple of My God. A pillar could indicate stability, permanence, continuance. God is telling them, "I'm going to give you an eternal place of stability. I'm going put you in a place that will never be shaken – it will never move. It will be eternally secure!"

*and he shall go out no more.*

Here we read the message of never being separated from the shelter of God's presence.

*I will write on him the name of My God*

The name of God speaks of God's character and ownership.

In the Tribulation, the 144,000 Jews have the Father's name written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1) which identifies whose they are and provides for their protection (Rev. 7:3; 9:4).

Rev. 22:4 - *They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.* God's name will be recorded on all the redeemed in the eternal state!

*and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem*

During the Millennial Kingdom:

Jer. 3:17 - *At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.*

Eze. 48:35 - *...and the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE* ...because the LORD Jesus will rule and reign from the throne of David in the midst of Jerusalem!

Yet, the earthly Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom which shall be rebuilt, restored, and made the religious center of the world, is not the ultimate destination of the redeemed. The eternal abode of all the saints is the *New Jerusalem*. The New Jerusalem has never been defiled or marred by human sin and rebellion.

*the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.*

We will have eternal citizenship in the capital city of heaven, which is the New Jerusalem.

Rev. 21:2 - *Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*And I will write on him My new name*

It appears that this new name of Jesus that will be written on the overcomer recalls passages in Scripture His name is hinted at but not clearly revealed (Gen. 32:29; Judges 13:17-18; Prov. 30:4). Jesus is telling us that we, as believers have a reservation – an eternal reservation – in heaven – secure forever. Jesus is telling us that we will have written upon us the name of God the Father, the name of the New Jerusalem, His, Jesus', new name – by which you will know me FOREVER!

*He who has an ear, let him hear*

While this is being offered to all with natural ears...

*what the Spirit says to the churches.*”

Those who hear must be awakened/regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God.

I Cor. 2:14 - *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

### QUESTIONS

What is your immediate response to Jesus' message to the church in Philadelphia?

What impacts you most, positively or negatively?

Any V8 moments?

How will this message impact your walk with the Lord?

### HOMEWORK

Reread the handout for week 9 and look up the Bible references.

Note any questions you may have.

Make observations.

If you disagree with any view that was presented, dig into the Scripture to discover why you disagree. Document your view with chapter and verse.

Share what you are learning with others.

Read the handout for week 10 when you receive it.