

## Revelation 3.7-13

“Go For It!!”

Churches have PERSONALITIES > Like People > Collection of People  
 Letters of Jesus to Churches > MOST have Commendation AND Criticisms  
 6<sup>th</sup> Letter > Church in Philadelphia > like SMYRNA  
 Letter to Philadelphia > NO Disapproval or Reproach > Only COMMENDED

MAP - Philadelphia > modern Alashehir > 50 kms. South East of Sardis  
 BEGAN in Ephesus > following Circular MAIL ROUTE > Ancient Roman Asia  
 Youngest of 7 Cities > founded about 150 BC > by Attalus II Philadelphus  
 Name of City = “lover of his brother” > in Devotion to Brother Eumenes

1. Church before an Open Door / 2. Christ holding the Key / 3. Conqueror made a Pillar

## 1. Church before an Open Door

a. Open to the Submissive > Door God opens is Unshutable

v. 8 “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.”

Little Strength > Size - most Christian communities then QUITE SMALL

FEW Members had Influence in Community > DESPISED MINORITY

PAUL to Believers in CORINTH: “Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”  
 1 Corinthians 1.26,27

Little Strength > No Problem to a Big God > Little Lunch, Little Boy fed 5000

CONTRAST > Jewish Synagogue > Privileged Status in Roman System  
 Jews THOUGHT they CLOSED God’s Door to followers of Jesus > OPPOSITE

v. 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.”

“Since John himself had been born a Jew, we must not take the expression ‘synagogue of Satan’ in an anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic sense. The synagogue at Philadelphia was criticized, not for being Jewish, but for being hostile to Christians.”  
Bruce M. Metzger

#### DOOR CLOSED to those WITHOUT CHRIST

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may... go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."  
Revelation 22.14,15

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."  
Matthew 7.13,14

Human Weakness > No Hindrance to Power of God > When Shines Brightest  
Church in Romania under Communism:

Believers were Hounded, Persecuted, Imprisoned, Tortured, Martyred  
‘Weak’Ch. Triggered Movement > finally brought down brutal, Dictatorial Regime  
After Fall of Regime > on Church Bulletin Board: “The Lamb Won!”

#### b. Opportunity for Salvation DOOR of Salvation Open to Followers of Lamb

“there before me was a door standing open in heaven.” Revelation 4.1

“I am the door; whoever enters through me will be saved.” John 10.9

v. 12 “I will write on him 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 him my new name.”

#### ANCIENT PROPHECY about VINDICATION of God’s People

“The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD...Although you have been forsaken and hated...I will make you the everlasting pride and the joy of all generations...Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”  
Isaiah 60.14-16

PROPHECY FULFILLED > Right in this City of Philadelphia > SHOCKINGLY

Jews > Convinced by National Identity & Religious Heritage > People of God  
 Jews forfeited Privileges by Disbelief > Slander & Persecution of Christians

v. 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.”

“Now in the grim irony of providence what the Jews fondly expected from the Gentiles, they themselves will be forced to render to the Christians. They will play the role of the heathen and acknowledge that the church is the true Israel of God.”

J. Moffatt

Christians at Philadelphia > Excommunicated from local Jewish Synagogue  
 No Worries! > They have Open Door into Eternal Kingdom > No one can Shut It!

c. Opposition to Service > Romans called Philadelphia > “Missionary City”

“Missionary City” spread Greek Culture to Newly Annexed > Lydia and Phrygia  
 Success > by A.D. 19 Greek Language replaced Lydian in nation of Lydia

Philadelphia > “Gateway to the East” > City of Commercial Importance  
 Eastern end of a Broad Valley that leads to Aegean Sea near Smyrna  
 Strategic location at the Juncture of several Trade Routes

Door of SALVATION was ALSO a Door of SERVICE -  
 As the “keeper of the gateway to the plateau,” it had been given a unique  
 opportunity to carry the gospel to the cities of Phrygia.” Sir William Ramsay

Paul & Barnabas gave MISSIONARY REPORT to Sending Church > Antioch  
 “They gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through  
 them and how he had *opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*” Acts 14.27

And pray for us, too, that God may open *a door for our message*, so that we may  
 proclaim the mystery of Christ” Colossians 4.3

HARD SERVICE > Persecutions : v. 10 “I will also keep you from the hour of trial  
 that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”

Christ promises Deliverance THROUGH Trial NOT FROM Trial  
 2000 Bloody Years of Church History PROVE THIS Truth

GOD'S MARTYRS ask: "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ... they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their *fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed* as they had been was completed." Revelation 6.10,11

"a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me" 1 Corinthians 16.9

MOST Interpret > "many who oppose" > SIGN the DOOR IS CLOSED!  
 Door of Present Opportunity > Open for Witness to the Power of the Gospel  
 What DOORS has God Opened for You? Are you giving Excuses or Obedience?

"I have no doubt that the fierceness of this opposition to the truth tempted the Philadelphian Christians to hold their peace and mind their own business...But Christ was of another mind. It was in this very city where Jewish antagonism was so strong that he opened a door for the gospel." John Stott

## 2. Christ holding the Key

a. Worthy v. 7 "him who is holy and true, who holds the key"

IMPORTANT PEOPLE are KNOWN BY THEIR KEYS > TRUSTED  
 Famous Book in Uganda "The Man with the Key is Gone"  
 OFTEN SPOKEN REFRAIN > When TRYING to get ANYTHING Done

1972 > President of Uganda, Idi Amin > deported all Indians w/ 48 hr Notice  
 INDIANS > Some 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen Citizens > Business Class, ONLY Locksmiths  
 Small Bit of Revenge for Losing all their Property > Locked Everything Possible  
 Took Away the Keys > WHOLE NATION "The Man with the Keys is Gone!!"

God's Key Keeper is not HITRI > No Revenge > No Arrogance > Holy & True  
 "True" > "genuine" > contra Jews of Philadelphia: 'Christ was a false Messiah'  
 "True" > "faithful" > Christ is Promise Keeper > will Finish Messianic Task

Familiar title for God > HOLY attribute most often used to describe God of Bible

b. Works > Possible to have Pocketful of Keys > Still LOCKED OUT of House  
 HAVE MANY KEYS > BUT NOT THE RIGHT KEYS

JESUS NEVER HAS JAMMED KEY > NEVER BLUNTED OR BENT

v. 7 “What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.”

Even Death > Seemingly so FINAL & INVINCIBLE > NO THREAT TO HIM

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” Revelation 1.18

Jesus to Death & Hell: ‘I OWN You Guys’ > Been There, Done That, Got KEYS!

c. Words > Simple Words “Jesus Loves You” > Transform Darkest Night

v. 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.

v. 10 “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you”

1.3 “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it”

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16.19

BIND & LOSE > Declare the GOSPEL > Power to Set Free / Ignore at Great Risk

“Christ has the keys. He opens the doors. Let us not barge through doors which are still closed...More mistakes are probably made by speed than by sloth...If the door is shut, don’t put your shoulder to it. Wait till Christ takes out the keys and opens it.” John Stott

d. World v. 7 “holds the key of David”

Important PRINCIPLE in INTERPRETING Revelation > Look to Old Testament

Isaiah > Prophet to Faithless Judah > Corrupt Steward in King’s Palace > Shebna

God will Raise Righteous Steward > Eliakim > Faithful Servant in God’s House

“I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.” Isaiah 22.22,23

Church > Difficulty from Jewish Synagogue > Jesus Controls House of David

“The Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... The *nations* will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. *On no day will its gates ever be shut...*The glory and honor of the *nations* will be brought into it.”  
Revelation 21.2,24-26

Brother in Law recently visited > ONE FRUSTRATION with Almaty  
Brought AMERICAN EXPRESS Card > Planning to Use for all Expenses  
Very Few Businesses ACCEPTED Card > WORTHLESS CREDIT CARD!!

“the key of David” > Metaphor = Complete Control over the Royal Household  
Undisputed Authority to Admit or Exclude from the New Jerusalem  
KEY of DAVID > It’s EVERYWHERE YOU WANT TO BE!

“I, Jesus... am the Root and the Offspring of David” Revelation 22.16

“What neither Eliakim nor any other saint in the Old Testament could do, Christ has done. His reliability and strength are such that one can rest on him all the weight of the host of redeemed people and their destiny.” Vern S. Poythress

### 3. Conqueror made a Pillar

a. Permanent > Believers in Philadelphia had EARTHQUAKE INSURANCE

v. 12 “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.”

Philadelphia > Devastated by Earthquake in 17 A.D > City was Rebuilt  
Most people STILL LIVED OUTSIDE the City in of FEAR of Another Quake  
City terrified by Earthquakes > Promise of permanence in God’s New Jerusalem  
You may be PILGRIM in THIS LIFE > You will be a PILLAR in the NEXT

// Eliakim God’s Faithful Steward: “I will drive him like a peg into a firm place”  
Isaiah 22.23

REVEL 22 > No TEMPLE in God’s New Jerusalem > CONTRADICTION??!  
“John is not in the slightest concerned to keep the details of one vision consistent with those of another. In each he is making a point with emphasis, and we should not try to dovetail one vision into the details of another. Apocalyptic imagery is sufficiently fluid to allow the figure of a temple in one vision and to dismiss it in another.”  
Bruce M. Metzger

BELIEVERS WILL BE REWARDED > for FAITHFUL SERVICE for JESUS  
v. 11 “Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

Hold on for Crown: Wreath awarded to the Winner of an Athletic Contest  
Appropriate Promise for Philadelphia > Known for its Games and Festivals

“The Lord’s promise that the overcomer will be a pillar in the temple of my God is a promise of full and abiding power and dignity in the cosmic spiritual sanctuary that he is raising up...a pillar, by its nature and function, is not removable! The Psalmist rejoiced in the same assurance when he confidently declared, ‘I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever’” Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

b. Personal 2 Different Times the city of Philadelphia got a NEW NAME

After great earthquake of A.D. 17 > took name Neocaesarea ‘New Ceasar’  
as APPRECIATION for Imperial help received for REBUILDING

Emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79) another New Name > “Flavia” appeared on Coins

v. 12 “I will write on him 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 him my new name.”

After Transforming Encounters with God > People have a NEW NAME

Solomon’s temple: “...pillars at the portico of the temple. The pillar to the south he named Jakin and the one to the north Boaz” 1 Kings 7.21

Further Promise to Overcomers > Christ will write:

Name of his God > Name of God’s City > His Own New Name

3-fold Inscript > Belong to God, Citizens in New Jerusalem, Special Relation to X

“He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself” Revelation 19.12

High Priest > wore gold plated engraving “HOLY to the LORD” on Forehead

“The Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had *his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads*” Revelation 14.1

Naming > Represents the Stamp of the Overcomer’s Authentic Citizenship

c. Persuasive > Door Open to all Church > Not Just Leaders > Select Few

vs. 11,13 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown...He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Message to Each Church > at Same Time a Message to ALL CHURCHES

The “coming” of Christ:

to Ephesus (2:5) > Lampstand would be Removed > Unless they Repented

Pergamum (2:16) > Christ would fight against them with the Sword of his Mouth

Sardis (3:3) > Jesus would come like a Thief

Philadelphia > Jesus COMING to HELP them in their HOUR OF NEED

“Always, at some level of its life, the church lives against the grain of its culture. When it does so, it loses the power and prestige that comes with being a supporter of the status quo. There is a powerful temptation to “play the world’s games,” to let the world set the agenda, to operate by the world’s rules so as to be an “influence for God” in the world. After all, if, individually or corporately, we give up our positions of influence, prestige, and power in the world how can we advance the kingdom? But in a kingdom established by a crucified Messiah, life comes through death, victory through defeat, strength through weakness, power through powerlessness. We need a lot more Philadelphia-type churches in the world today.”

M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.



\*\*\*\*\*

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.

8. 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 upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

11. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

12. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him 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 him my new name.

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