

Session 7 Jesus' Message to the Church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)

I. PRIMARY MESSAGE: FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS NOW RESULTS IN ETERNAL HONOR

We are on the sixth church of the seven churches that Jesus addressed in Revelation 2 and 3. For those who are just visiting or here for the first time, this is Jesus in His resurrected body describing the Church after His own heart. It is not just that He valued these various things in the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, but the things that He highlights are activities that we need to embrace as well as sins, compromises, and temptations we need to avoid in the hour when the Book-of-Revelation storyline unfolds. So this is a specific word from Jesus about what kind of Church is going to succeed and prosper in the generation He returns, when the Book-of-Revelation events unfold across the earth.

- A. The church of Philadelphia faithfully obeyed God's Word even amidst great difficulty. Jesus gave this church no rebuke but only affirmation as He did the church at Smyrna.

⁷***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...⁸I know your works. I have set before you an open door...[you] have kept My word and have not denied My name.***
Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan...to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world...¹¹Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. ¹²He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple...I will write on him the name of My God and the name of...the New Jerusalem...and I will write on him My new name.'" (Rev. 3:7-12)

Let's just read this abbreviated version here so we can get the feel of it for those of you not familiar with it. I am skipping some of the passage to get it short and right to the point.

Verse 7, "And to the angel," or the messenger, "of the church in Philadelphia," Jesus said, "Write this message." Now He describes Himself in these three ways, "These things says He who is holy." He said, "I am holy," number one. Number two, "He that is true," and then "He that has the key of David." With the key of David He can open and shut any door that He wants. That is what the key of David is related to.

He says in verse 8, "I know your works. I have set before you an open door." That is, I have the authority to open and shut doors and I have put before you an open door. "I know that you have kept My word and have not denied My name."

Verse 9, "Indeed, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan to know that I have loved you." What a statement and what a promise! What does that mean? He is going to make the Jews in Philadelphia—unbelieving Jews who were persecuting the Messianic Jews in the city—know that He, the God of Israel, Jesus the Messiah, loves these Messianic believers. That is what He is saying a really specific way to the church of Philadelphia.

He said verse 10, "I am going to keep you from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole earth." Now, here in verse 10, see one of the most important parts: "Because you have kept My command to persevere." That is the core exhortation: "Keep My command to persevere." In other words, "Do not quit." I have said many times that I think the number one temptation of the human race is to quit, to quit on the path before them when there are obstacles and trouble, both believers and unbelievers. The great temptation of the human spirit is to wilt before obstacles, and He says, "I do not want you to quit." The way that He applies this is: "Do not quit pressing in for My fullness and do not quit the assignment I gave you when it becomes difficult and challenged." Those are the two most common things and most easy to do after the years that unfold. People

press in for ten or fifteen years believing for the full revival, the full encounter of God. And then somewhere along the way, say the ten-year mark—which is not exactly the number, but in my forty years of pastoring I have seen a lot of people go hard for five or ten years, but then after that it is like, “Well, maybe this is just how it is”—they begin to draw back and settle in to that passive, vanilla Christianity.

They were on fire for years, yet they quit. They did not quit the faith, but they quit the vision to have the fullness in their life and in their generation. And the second thing people do is quit the assignment God gave them. You know they can testify five years ago, ten years ago, two years ago, “God told me to do this!” but when the obstacles come, suddenly, “I feel released!”

And the Lord would say, “Do not quit the assignment I gave you because it will be challenging. There will be setbacks.” He says here, “If you will obey that command to persevere in these ways, I will keep you from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole earth.”

Verse 11, “Hold fast to what you have.” Hold fast to what you have, and then He makes this very unsettling warning, “Make sure no one steals or takes your crown from you.” Hold fast to what you and the Lord have together because you could lose your crown—you can lose of the reward that God ordained to give you that was potentially yours—if you do not hold fast. And you hold fast through humility, through perseverance, through staying steady when under pressure and challenged with obstacles.

Verse 12 is, to the natural mind, one of the most dramatic and just unbelievable set of promises. He actually gives five promises that you will see if you read the whole verse. We are just looking at a part of it here. He says, “If you overcome”—this seems impossible to the natural mind, not realistic, as verse 12 is so extravagant! He says—“If you overcome, I will make you a pillar in the temple of God in the age to come.” Make me a pillar Lord? Really? Number two, “If you overcome, you are never ever going to leave that temple.” What does that mean? “If you overcome, I will write the name of My God on you.” Well, He will go beyond that: “I will write the name of the New Jerusalem on you,” and then He goes on and adds, “I will write on you My new name, the name that will be unveiled, My nature, things about Me that will only be clear after My second coming when you see new things about Me that you do not know right now.” This is Jesus speaking. “I will write that upon you.” Wow, what an extravagant promise!

- B. Jesus presented Himself in a way that emphasizes how He understands and intervenes to help those who are persecuted and who face obstacles in fully walking out God's will.

⁷*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... (Rev. 3:7)*

He presents Himself to each of the seven churches. He identifies facets of His nature and His majesty that will be particularly helpful for the challenges that particular church has. So these are not just random things where He picks a few of His noble virtues and says, “Hey, check those out.” No, these three things that He highlights are particularly important for the challenges facing the church at Philadelphia, and of course it is for the whole Church—the Church all through history and then at the end of the age faces those same challenges.

What He is really saying in these three different facets of His majesty and character is how much He cares about His people and how He is committed to intervene and to open and shut doors on their behalf so that they can walk in the whole will of God. Even though it may look for a season that He is not opening that door, surely He will open that door of opportunity and blessing and He will shut that door of hostility and attack and trouble that is coming against me. “Lord! How long will You wait?”

He would say, “My leadership is perfect. I have all of the authority, and I am committed to open and shut those doors in My perfect wisdom and will.”

Let's read verse 7 again and look at these three facets of His personality that He highlights in order to embolden and equip them to face the challenges unique to the church of Philadelphia. Number one, He declares Himself as “He who is holy.” Number two, He declares Himself as “He who is true.” And number three, He declares Himself as “He who has the key of David and therefore can open and shut doors.” He can open doors of blessing and opportunity that no man nor any devil can shut, but not just that—He can shut doors through which the enemy is trying to come in like a flood to destroy you. The enemy is opening doors of hostility against your life, and Jesus says, “I can shut that door in My perfect timing. Trust Me, I have the key of David.” And so what are these three facets of His character and majesty that He highlighted for the church of Philadelphia which we can apply to our own lives?

1. **He who is holy:** Jesus, as God, is holy as in transcendent or infinitely superior to all. Thus, He is worth whatever it costs to love and obey Him. Jesus, as a man, is holy as in fully set apart to God. He understands what it means to walk out costly commitments (Heb. 4:15).

*Number one, He calls Himself: “He who is holy.” Now there are two applications to the word ‘holy’ when it pertains to God. We are very familiar with holiness because the word, *holy*, means set apart or separate from. That is what the word, *holy*, means: to be set apart or to be separated from something and set apart to something. And we all know that God is set apart from sin; He is pure. We all know that, and so when we think of holiness, we think, “He is pure. He is set apart from everything that is dark and sinful.”*

However, His holiness has a second application that is even different than this and it is even greater than this. He is not just set apart from everything that is dark and sinful; He is set apart from everything created. He is wholly other-than. He is transcendent. He is infinitely superior to everything even that is good. He is not just separated from what is bad. He is infinitely greater from everything that is good as well.

He says, “I am holy.” That is, “As God, I am in a realm”—Jesus is talking about—“I am the holy God. I have all power, all authority. Nothing is impossible for Me!” but then He says, as well, “I am holy as a man; I know the temptations you face.” He is a sympathetic High Priest; He knows what it costs to obey in the place of pressure and temptation, and so when He says, “I am holy,” in the secondary sense as a man He says, “I get the plight that you face. I understand what costly obedience is about.”

And so as the transcendent God, wholly and infinitely superior, nothing is impossible. And as a man who is radically committed, He knows the cost; He knows what costly obedience is all about.

2. **He who is true:** He is reliable to keep all His promises including the extravagant ones in 3:12.

Well, the second thing He says is “I am true.” That is, just in one sentence, He is reliable. In effect, “All of My promises are reliable. You can count on them. Though they may be delayed, though you may not understand how they unfold, you can trust My promises. They are reliable. I am not a man that I should lie. Everything that I have spoken will come to pass.”

3. **He has the key of David:** Jesus is the ultimate son of David who has authority over all the promises that the Father gave to David, including those fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom.

Number three, He goes to the third facet of His majesty and character that He emphasizes to this particular church: “He has the key of David.” That is a big statement. Well, Jesus is the ultimate Son of David. David had many sons over the generations, I mean sons and grandsons and great grandsons all the way through history. However, there is one ultimate Son of David. And the point being, all of the promises that the Father gave to

David in his humanity, Jesus said “I have authority over all of those promises; they are all Mine. They are within the sphere of My ability and discretion to release according to My wisdom. I have the key. With the key I can open the resources of the royal treasury of David that God promised David.” The key of David meant that you could use David’s authority to release the royal resources into the kingdom; I am talking about the kings after David because they had his key. They had the right to release his resources to do the will of God. Well, Jesus says, “I have all of them; they are all mine.”

4. This passage draws on Isaiah’s prophecy to Shebna about being removed from his leadership position in Hezekiah’s government and being replaced by Eliakim (Isa. 22:15-25). The Lord promoted Eliakim by giving him “the key to the house of David” so he could open and shut the doors of the royal resources to release God’s will in the kingdom of Israel (Isa. 22:22).

²²The key of the house of David I will lay on his [Eliakim’s] shoulder, so he shall open, and no one shall shut, and he shall shut, and no one shall open... (Isa. 22:22)

Now this phrase, “the key of David,” draws from Isaiah 22, and some of you know this passage. It is a good passage to be familiar with, and it is not too difficult to understand actually. There was a leader in Hezekiah’s government, one of his top leaders. His name was Shebna, and in Isaiah 22 Shebna was being replaced with Eliakim. Shebna was unfaithful, so the key of David was being taken from this top leader who in the course of his function did not prove faithful to the Lord. He was not diligent and true in the things that King Hezekiah committed to him, and so Shebna was replaced by Eliakim. And Eliakim now had the master key; he had the authority to release the resources of the kingdom of Israel throughout the land. He had this unique authority, and here Jesus is saying, as it were, “I am the ultimate Eliakim! I have all the authority to do this!”

However, He is actually going to refer to this prophecy a bit later here in Revelation 3 because He is going to make a promise that He will cause the overcomers to become pillars in His temple and they will never ever leave. Meaning, they will never ever be fired or replaced like Shebna was in Isaiah 22. Their job is secure. Their honor is secure forever. There is nothing that will happen in the age to come through which they would lose that which God has given them. And so Isaiah 22:22 is a passage that I have delighted in studying because the House of Prayer, and actually the Body of Christ, through prayer we operate in releasing the keys of the kingdom, the key of David, releasing the royal resources into the earthly realm which is part of what the key of David is.

He went on and said, “He who opens, and nobody shuts.” Beloved, He can open a door, and no matter how enraged the demons are, how enraged men are, believers or unbelievers, coming against you, they cannot shut the door that Jesus opens. And the problem with our natural temptation is that when we are in problems, we have to persevere. The church of Philadelphia had to persevere. They had persecution from the synagogue of Satan which was a group of Jews and Gentiles as well in the city, but He was really highlighting the Jewish hostility against them. There was a persecution bearing down upon the church of Philadelphia.

And our temptation is to quit when we are facing hostility from believers or unbelievers. When I look at my years of ministry, I have had far more hostility from believers than from unbelievers. And the Lord would say, “Do not get your eyes on them! Do not see your narrative through them. The narrative of your life is in My hands, not in their hands! You be humble. You submit to Me. You love Me, and the attack that raises up against you cannot prevail. It may be there for a while, but it cannot prevail.” That is what He is saying, as it were, “I have the keys and I can open doors and not even the whole denomination, the bishops”—whatever I am just making up leaders in authority in the Body of Christ—“cannot stop the will of God in your life.”

I have used this example about King David over the years. When he was just a young man in his twenties, he had been anointed king, but Saul the old jealous king mobilized three thousand soldiers of Israel's army. Can you imagine three thousand soldiers and their main task was to kill David? Three thousand soldiers chasing him through the land, and this went on for six or seven years. I mean, we are not talking about three thousand "likes" or "dislikes" or whatever you call them, not three thousand criticisms. Three thousand soldiers were coming to kill him. And here is the good news—and David lost sight of this a time or two but he always got it back—beloved, nobody could stop David. The armies of Saul, three thousand men, could not stop David in the will of God. All the demons in hell could not stop David in the will of God. The only person that could stop David in the will of God was David. If he gave in and gave up, he could be thwarted and step out of the will of God.

And so when we begin to see that Jesus has the key of David, He has all of the resources, He has all the authority to open and shut doors of promotion and blessing, and He is looking at your life, and that group of believers or that group of unbelievers or that lawsuit or whatever the situation that we get our eyes on, because we are human and it is so easy to get our eyes on those, the Lord would say, "I want to assure you, the only person that can take you out of the will of God is you because I can open doors that nobody can shut no matter who they are, and if they are raging against you, I can shut those doors in My perfect timing." I have found over the years that every trial has an end to it. It really does. It seems like it does not, but I have looked at my own life, and I have seen the lives of others, and every attack, every point of adversity, does have an ending point. However, it does seem like it does not when you are in it, and that is why this passage is so very, very important.

5. **He opens and no one shuts:** Jesus opens doors that no one can shut. He alone has the keys of the kingdom with authority to open any door (Mt. 16:19). Neither men, nor demons, nor the Antichrist have the power to shut the doors that Jesus opens in our lives. Saul sought to kill David but could not stop God's will in David's life (1 Sam. 24:2; 26:2).
 6. **He who shuts and no one opens:** The enemy seeks to shut doors of opportunity and to open doors of hostility against God's people to hinder His purposes in their life. Jesus shuts doors in His love for us until their proper time. Paul sought to preach in Asia but was forbidden by the Spirit (Acts 16:6-7) who shut the doors to Asia yet opened them in Macedonia.
- C. Jesus gave them an *open door* of opportunity to participate with Him in this age and the age to come
⁸"...See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it..." (Rev. 3:8)

Jesus looked at them and said, "I have set before you an open door, and I have the authority to do it." Now the open door—do not miss it—that He put before you is an open door to participate in His kingdom in this age. We know that, but He has also set before you promises, and He is going to lay them out here, particularly in verse 12. In essence, "I am setting before you an open door of participation in the age to come, in a place of honor and authority that you cannot even imagine. However, what I want from you is for you not to quit. I want you to persevere." The sin that is tempting you, resist it. You might stumble, but rise up, resist it, and stay steady. That is a real issue; however, when those issues are settled—the adversity, the hostility, and the obstacles—the Lord says "Do not quit!"

The time delay: "Lord, I've believed You for Your promise for a breakthrough for my heart and power for ten years, twenty years!"

The Lord would say, "Do not quit. Do not quit pressing in."

Or maybe it is your ministry assignment: “Lord, You made it clear I am to do this and this, and I was so excited that I told all of my friends, but here at the five or ten-year mark AGH! I thought it would be easier and more fun than this!”

And the Lord would say, “Do not quit. Do not quit! It really is My assignment.”

A lot of times we get an assignment from the Lord, and we think because we are in America that we get to vote on it. He gives us an assignment and we say, “I do not want that assignment anymore. I want a different one.”

The Lord would say, “No, you do not understand. I am the Lord. I gave it to you.”

“Yeah, but I am an American. I take what I vote on. And if I do not vote, I do not want to do it.”

And He would say, “No, I gave it to you.”

Paul and Jesus both made this very significant point. In John 17, Jesus said, “I have finished the work!” In other words “You gave Me a journey and an assignment, and I finished it!” That is a major statement.

Paul said this, “I have run the course, and I am finishing the race keeping the course.” He was in all kinds of trouble in the course, but he did not give up the course in Acts 20. There is something about staying in the assignment that the Lord has given you.

Well, Jesus said, “I have set before you an open door in this age, and I have set before you an open door in the age to come.”

I am going to give you ten doors, nine plus one, nine yay ten that are examples. This is not comprehensive, and you could list more.

1. Jesus opens the doors in the Spirit to release increased revelation of God’s heart (Mt. 11:27).

*²⁷Nor does anyone know the Father except...the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.
(Mt. 11:27)*

Jesus opens the door in the Spirit to revelation about Himself. He says in Matthew 11, “Nobody knows the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son opens a door of revelation.”

“Father, I want to know You.”

The Father would say, “Live in unity with My Son. Live in connection with My Son, and it is given to whom He wills to be given more insight about Me.” And, of course, that is what verse 12 is about: knowing the name of the Father in a greater way.

2. Jesus has authority to open heaven to release angels to ascend and descend.

⁵¹You shall see heaven open and the angels...ascending and descending... (Jn. 1:51)

Jesus said He would open the heavens and they would see angels ascending and descending. Jesus can cause that supernatural dimension in our life to increase.

3. Jesus opens doors of ministry to us in this age (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:8-9; 2 Cor. 2:12).

³Praying for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak... (Col 4:3)

Paul prayed that the Lord would open doors of opportunity, new doors of ministry with blessing.

4. Jesus opens prison doors as He did for Peter (Acts 12:7-10) and Paul (Acts 16:27).

Peter and Paul were in prison, and supernaturally the Lord opened the doors.

5. Jesus opens the “scroll” of God’s end-time purposes that are in the Father’s hand.

⁵The Lion of the tribe of Judah... has prevailed to open the scroll... (Rev. 5:5)

Jesus takes the scroll, God's end time purposes to cleanse the earth and transition the earth to the age to come. He takes the scroll, and He opens it! No man has the authority to take the scroll and open it besides Him. Jesus can open that door.

6. Jesus has the keys to call the New Jerusalem down to the earth (Rev. 3:12).

¹²...the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. (Rev. 3:12)

7. Jesus opens doors of government in the age to come to any whom He chooses (Mt. 19:28).

²⁸“...you who have followed Me will sit on twelve thrones, judging...Israel.” (Mt. 19:28)

Jesus opens the doors of who will be in government in the age to come. Now, a lot of believers never think about that. They think, “Well, it will just take care of itself,” and I want to challenge your thinking on this. There is more in the scripture about this subject than most believers are aware.

Jesus with His own mouth actually said to the disciples, “Because you are obeying Me, I am going to give you thrones.” Now, every believer is a citizen of the New Jerusalem, every believer has a free gift of God is a part of the family, but not every believer has a crown or sits on a throne.

There are all kinds of diversity and different measures of rewards in the age to come linked to our obedience in this life. Not linked to our impact, not to how many people we touch. It is linked to our heart response to His leadership and to Jesus Himself. He looks at the twelve and gives this most remarkable statement, “I have the authority. I can open the door!” like this Eliakim in Isaiah 22 I mentioned. “I can put you on a throne or I will not!” And He gave these fishermen and this tax collector, Matthew—I mean that guy was really in a life of darkness—and the Lord said, “I am going to put you on a throne because you said yes to Me and My leadership.” Not because they made a great impact, although undoubtedly they did make an impact in their generation, but it was their heart responses, because they followed the Lord though there was great difficulty in it.

8. Jesus will open the bottomless pit to shut Satan in prison for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

He opens the door of the bottomless pit and throws Satan into prison.

9. Jesus has the keys over Hades and Death (the demonic realm and eternal judgment).

¹⁸I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Rev. 1:18)

He has the keys to open the door to the realm of darkness and to demons, to deal with them, to judge them. He opens the door to eternal judgment. He has the keys of hell and death.

10. Jesus has great authority, yet He will not open the door of our heart but waits for us to open it.

²⁰I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)

With all of the authority that Jesus has and all the doors that He can open, nobody can stop Him. I mean, these doors are remarkable doors. Look at this in Revelation 3:20 a few verses later, which we will look at next week. He says, in essence, “I stand at the door of your heart and I knock, and I will not open that door. That is the one

door I will not force open. I will wait until you open it, and if you do, open it wide,” and not just the initial day of salvation.

We use that verse a lot when we are talking to an unbeliever. We say, “Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart, and if you open it you can be born again.” That is okay, but that is not what Jesus is really talking about in that verse, though I use that verse and the Lord does not mind that. And a lot of people say, “Oh, wow, I get it!”

He is talking about a believer in a sustained way keeping the door of their heart open so they are obeying the Lord on His terms. And His terms are pretty severe sometimes. He requires humility and servanthood in a way that is outside of the box of most of our thinking. Like we all like the words, “humility and servanthood,” everybody does, but when it comes down to the day-to-day, it is like “Ugh!” That is a little rougher on the flesh, and it is not so glorious, but in interacting with His heart, that is the door He wants to stay open. And it does not mean that we do it perfectly, but there is that reach, and He says, in effect, “I have all of the authority, but I will not open that door. I will wait on you to voluntarily, in voluntary love, to open it to Me.”

II. AFFIRMED FOR FAITHFULNESS WITHOUT ANY CORRECTION

- A. Jesus affirmed their faithfulness to obey His word to and to persevere in seeking Him and walking out their assignment in the face of temptations, obstacles, setbacks, delays, and persecutions, etc.

⁸**“...[You] have kept My word...¹⁰ You have kept My command to persevere...” (Rev. 3:8, 10)**

Revelation 3:8, He says “I know your works; you have kept My word.” Then He gets more specific in verse 10, “You have kept My command to persevere,” and to persevere means not to quit. We touched on that earlier. “I command you not to quit! That is My command”

You are facing temptation, “I am just tired of this temptation!”

The Lord says “Do not quit!”

In facing the reach for the fullness of His purpose for your life and this generation, “Lord, I have been believing You for a breakthrough for years. I just think I am going to coast. I mean I have been reaching for years!”

The Lord says, “Do not quit. I command you not to quit.”

And then in the ministry, it is silent. “This is more difficult. It is not as glorious as I thought. There are more obstacles than I was imagining.”

The Lord says “Do not quit. I command you not to quit.”

Again, this idea of quitting, in my opinion, is the most common temptation in the human spirit and for believers. That is who I am really talking about with the idea of drawing back and settling in, not denying the faith, but just drawing back and saying, “You know what I am just going to coast the last x-amount of years.”

⁴**“...I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” (Jn. 17:4)**

²⁴**“...that I may finish my race...and the ministry which I received from the Lord...” (Acts 20:24)**

- B. The synagogue of Satan speaks of a place where Satan was active in persecuting those proclaiming the gospel. Jesus told some Pharisees that they were of their father the devil (Jn. 8:41-47).

⁹**I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not... (Rev 3:9)**

He talked about the synagogue of Satan because that is where they were being resisted in the most direct way. There are many points of resistance to believers. However, He highlights that there was a synagogue of Satan, and what He means by this is that it was a synagogue of Jewish people who were energized in an inordinate way to stop the gospel. A lot of synagogues do not pay attention to what the Christians are doing on the other side of town. It does not cross their mind much. However, there are some that Jesus called the synagogue of Satan who had an inordinate and unusual hostility to use their place of influence to persecute the church.

So that is what He is talking about there, and I assume—I cannot say with certainty—that He is talking particularly to Jewish believers who came to the faith probably from that synagogue and who are really paying the price in their family, their place of employment, their social status within the city of Philadelphia, and it is really rough. And they are saying, “This is tough!”

The Lord says “Persevere. I know that group.” I am guessing, as there is not history which gives us the details, but I am guessing that it was more than a few. I think it was a robust resistance by that synagogue in that particular city.

III. EXHORTATION TO RESPOND (WITH A WARNING)

- A. Jesus warned them not to allow anyone to influence them in a way that leads them to embrace lies about Him or a lifestyle that resists His leadership. A believer can lose rewards that they could have received in the age to come (1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Jn. 8).

“...Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” (Rev. 3:11)

Verse 11, He says “I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that nobody may take your crown.” I have spoken on this verse a few times in this series, but also over the years. Think about this verse. It is from the lips of Jesus.

This is a warning-exhortation about which is easy just to think, “Well, who knows for sure. I am not worried about it.” I take this seriously: you can lose your crown.

Jesus is saying, “Do not let someone take your crown.”

How does somebody take your crown? The way they do it is that they influence you to believe lies about Jesus. And then they influence you to embrace a lifestyle that resists His leadership. It is happening all over the Church today in our nation. There are multitudes of believers who have been steady in the faith five or ten years, fifteen or twenty. Now new arguments are in the culture. “Is the word of God really the final authority?” “Is the God of the Old Testament really to be believed?” “Is the Jesus of the Bible the one, or are these modern days a little different?” Many believers are backing away from Jesus’ final authority over their life in faith and practice as in the word of God, and they are renegotiating this. When you renegotiate that, you are only a couple of years away from renegotiating, “Well, you know, now that I really think about it”—and I know lots of believers that are doing it—“I think that all paths lead to God anyway.”

I have seen that coming out of the confession of people who had been on-fire believers ten and twenty years ago. I cannot even believe it. They start with. “Well, I do not really know about this area, this area, this area, this area...” The sanctity of life, the sanctity of sex, the sanctity of marriage, and many other issues are in the cultural wars, and it is really an issue of Jesus’ authority and the authority of the word of God. But they back away from that, and they believe lies about Jesus in those areas and many others. Then they start believing lies: “Is He the only way of salvation? Was His death on the cross really essential or was it just as an example as a martyr showing us an example of being steady under pressure?” instead of believing in His substitutionary

death where He took our sin, “He that knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we could become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.”

I have seen many people believe lies about Jesus and then “a minute later,” maybe some months, they start embracing lifestyle habits that they never would have touched earlier “Well, it’s all under the grace of God anyway. I mean, it is just my body. It does not really matter. In my spirit I love God in my own way.”

Jesus said that if you let somebody seduce you into those lies, that person has taken your crown from you. Well, really, it is the believer who was the one who yielded it by yielding to the influence of that. And this kind of dynamic is really increasing today, not just in America, but all over the earth. This is a very, very valid exhortation for the end-time church. A believer can lose rewards that they could have received.

¹⁵If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved... (1 Cor. 3:15)

Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 3:15, about the believer who suffers loss, though he is saved, yet he suffers the loss of what the Lord would have given him. He is still a citizen of heaven. He is still part of the family. He still has joy in the age to come, but there is much more that the Lord would have given him in terms of his role and function and many, many facets. There are maybe ten or twelves different facets which are depicted in the scripture. I have been a very eager student of eternal rewards. I love this subject because Jesus spoke more on eternal rewards than any other person in scripture because He knew more about them than any other person in scripture. I do not look at this and say, “Wow this is kind of neat.” I say “No! This is like really important! I am staring at this!”

**⁸Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for...that you may be rewarded fully.
(2 Jn. 8)**

- B. ***Hold fast what you have:*** We must hold on to the same measure of obedience that we walk in when we are closest to God’s heart and most radical in our responses to Him.

IV. SEVEN PROMISES TO OVERCOMES IN PHILADELPHIA (3:9-12)

- A. ***Promise #1—I will make them to know that I have loved you*** (3:9): Jesus will manifest His zeal for the faithful by vindicating them before those who persecuted them. On the last day, the persecutors of the believers at Philadelphia will worship Jesus at the feet of those they once persecuted. At that time, the wicked will bow to Jesus in the presence of His people (Isa. 45:14; 49:23; 60:14).

⁹“I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not...indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet and to know that I have loved you.” (Rev. 3:9)

Now I am going to lay out the seven promises that He gives to the person who refuses to quit. Beloved, these rewards, put your name on them. This was spoken to the church of Philadelphia, but I believe that these promises are available to believers outside of that particular church in that city two thousand years ago.

Verse 9 is a bit of an odd one to our thinking. We think, “Really? Huh, would that be important to me then?” Well, if Jesus says that it is a reward for perseverance, I think it will be more important than we can understand right now, and so I just take it by faith. I care about this more than I know that I care about it because this is from His beautiful lips.

He said, “I will make those people from the synagogue of Satan,” and again I am imagining He is talking to any of the believers in Philadelphia, or any believers in history really. But I think He is particularly saying, “You Jewish believers in Jesus, you Messianic believers who left that synagogue or you were actually kicked

out of it, you are bearing reproach in your family, you are bearing reproach in your social status, and you are bearing reproach in the place of your employment. I will make those people persecuting you”—listen to this—“They say they are Jews and they are from the bloodline of Abraham but they are not really Jews in My opinion because they have this hostility towards the God of Israel who sent Me as His Son and as Israel’s King. Here is what I am going to do: I am going to make them come and worship before your feet. And I am going to make them to know that I loved you.” Like, what? That is a promise.

Now, they are not going to worship these believers, but we know that on the last day every single one will bow and every tongue will confess, every demon in hell, every unbeliever, every believer, everybody will bow their knee, Philippians 2:10, and confess the supremacy of Jesus, the Man who is fully God and fully man. They will bow before Him. The Lord is saying, in effect, “I will see to it that, when they bow before Me and acknowledge My supremacy, that you are present, near them when it happens.”

I think, “Well, You do not have to,” but the Lord would say, “No, no, you will understand more in that day. I vindicate My people openly and fully in a way that they cannot imagine.”

Because we might go some years and not see the breakthrough of the power, breakthrough of all of the promises, the breakthrough of this, the breakthrough of that and everything we are believing for, we might think, “Well, maybe it is not going to work,” but the Lord would say, “Oh, I promise you, I will vindicate your faithfulness in a way that will blow your mind!” Those are my terms, not His. “But I am going to cause them, even in that day, I am going to see to it that they acknowledge Me, and therefore they will see that wisdom has been vindicated by her children, that your life choices were wise. Wisdom has been vindicated by the way you chose. You lost your job. you lost your status. you lost your friends. They are going to see the wisdom of what you did. I want them to see it on that day.”

“Well, Lord, You do not have to,” and He would say, “I do, because that is who I am, and not only that, I am going to show them on the last day how much I actually love you. That I actually knew you.”

“Well, Lord, it looks like I am persecuted and things are not going very well.”

“Oh, I am going to show openly how I feel about you on that day, for even your enemies will see it with their eyes.” That is a remarkable reality.

- B. **Promise #2—I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God:** This speaks of those who will receive a place of honor and authority in Jesus’ millennial kingdom. Pillars functioned to beautify a building while bearing its weight and recalling the noble deeds of the people associated with it.

¹² ... **I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.** (Rev. 3:12)

Promise #2 – “I am going to make the overcomer”—the one who does not quit. The overcomer is the one who perseveres. It is this one word, persevere. Do not quit!—“I am going to make him a pillar in My temple.” Now this means much more than what I understand, but there is a bit in the scripture on pillars. And when we study what the scriptures says about pillars, and we even observe the place and the role of pillars in society through history and by seeing what the scripture says, observing historical precedents, we can gain some insight on what the future rewards are, not perfect insight, but some insight.

To be made a pillar speaks of being a person of honor and authority, but not in the general sense, because I am assuming there will be a couple billion believers in the New Jerusalem with resurrected bodies forever and forever. I do not know the numbers—nobody does—but a billion throughout history, I just made up that number by the way. A billion today across the earth—I do not know if that is really true, but some say it—and a billion

in the great harvest so that is a couple billion right there. Of course that is very general math. All of them will not be pillars; they will not all have unique roles, i.e. special rolls of authority and honor. Again, it is not the famous ones in this age. It is the ones who refuse to quit. Maybe no one even knows you or has ever seen you. They do not even know the plight that you are bearing; however, you do not quit. You stay steady to the end. That does not mean that you don't have bad weeks, but when you have a bad week and you think, "I am tired of this!" then week two you think, "No, no, no! He is worth it! What do you mean, I am tired of this?"

I have had people tell me, "I cannot take this anymore!" and I say "Really? What exactly are your options?"

"No, really I cannot take pressing into God!"

"Okay, just lay your weapons down and let the devil have at it? The options are really bad. There is no other way forward. He alone has the words of eternal life. There is no other way."

Now I do not say it that roughly when they say, "I cannot take it anymore." I just hug them and love them, but I think, "In a minute I am going to tell you that there are no good options." Again, you can lay your weapons down and just let the devil destroy you or you can stay in the fight and use your spiritual armor.

Well, He says, "I will make them a pillar in My temple." Here I highlight three ways that pillars function, and there are more than these, but this will give you a feeling. Pillars beautify a particular building. Part of it was decorative, it really was, but of course the main thing is that they bear the weight of the building. And the Lord is going to have people from this age that will bear—well, they are bearing weight in the kingdom now in their responsibilities—but they will bear weight in the age to come, real responsibility that matters.

You know, God created you with a cry for relevance. He created you with a longing to bear the weight of what is important. It does not have to be a large number of things, but it has to be things that are important to the Lord's kingdom. And you are bearing it. And again, the numbers are small, but they stay in the battle, and they bear it.

Pillars were also used to write the names and sometimes the abbreviated story of the people of the city that did heroic or noble deeds. They would have their name on the pillar or they would have some icon-type pictures that would give indication of their nobility and their heroic deeds in that city. That is on the pillar, so it was a memorial. It was a pillar of remembrance, it bore the weight of the building, and it beautified the building.

In Galatians 2:9, Paul the apostle said that Peter and John were pillars of the Church. They were bearing weight in a way that really mattered.

I really like this one, promise #2. This is like gloriously—I was going to say ridiculous but that is not the right word—but it is just like, "What!" He has these twelve names written on the gates in the New Jerusalem; twelve humans! How do you get your name on a gate in the New Jerusalem? That is not ridiculous, but it is like indescribably extravagant. They are the apostles. I mean, you look at the way they stumbled and fumbled and fought before the Book of Acts, and even after the Book of Acts there were some wavering with some of them. Their names are on the foundation stone; that is the pillar dimension.

⁹When James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars... (Gal. 2:9)

1. In the ancient world, when someone served their city in special way, a pillar was built in their honor with their name written on it. Jacob set a pillar on Rachel's grave (Gen. 35:20).
2. The 12 sons of Jacob and the 12 apostles will have their names written in the New Jerusalem.

¹²*She [New Jerusalem]...with twelve gates...and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of...Israel...¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* (Rev. 21:12-14)

3. The pillars in God's earthly temple and tabernacle give us insight into this promise. There were 60 pillars in Moses' tabernacle (Ex.27:10). Solomon had names written on the two pillars in temple (1 Kgs. 7:13-22; 2 Chr. 3:17)—*Jachin* (stability) and *Boaz* (strength).
- C. **Promise #3—He shall go out no more:** Jesus promised them that they would never be removed from their place of honor in their specific role in the “temple ministry” in the age to come.

He says, “They will not go out of the temple anymore.” We don’t know fully what that means, but the passage that Jesus is appealing to is the one that I shared at the very beginning, Isaiah 22, where Shebna was replaced by Eliakim. And what He is saying here is, “You are not ever going to be replaced. There will not be a new situation, a new stumbling, a new anointing on the new guy. You will have that place forever. You will never ever lose that place.” That is a really, really big statement.

- D. **Promise #4—I will write on him the name of My God:** God promised to write His Word on our heart and mind (Heb. 10:16) as He wrote the ten commandments on tablets of stone (Ex. 31:18). When God writes His name on our heart it empowers us emotionally to feel holy desires for Him. When He writes His name on our mind it increases our understanding of Him.

¹²*“...I will write on him the name of My God and...the New Jerusalem...[and] My new name.”* (Rev. 3:12)

Promise #4: Now there is so much more to these promises than meets the eye. These are just whispers and hints. Holy Spirit would say, “Ask Me, and I will tell you more about each one of these.” He says, “I will write on that person the name of My God, My Father. I will write My Father’s name on them.” Remember the verse we looked at earlier, Matthew 11:27, where He said “Nobody knows the Father except for those to whom I will to give insight.” And here He says, “I am going to write the name of My Father on you.” The promise of the new covenant in this age and then in the age to come, the promise of the new covenant is that the Holy Spirit comes in us, right? That is the essence of the new covenant: the Holy Spirit comes inside of us. That is in this age, but it is also forever. He never leaves us. From the day you are born again, the Holy Spirit will never ever be gone from you. He will live in you forever. That is so beautiful.

¹⁶*“This is the covenant that I will make with them... I will put My laws [Word or Name] into their hearts [emotions] and in their minds [understanding] I will write them...”* (Heb. 10:16)

Here is what the covenant is: Hebrews 10:16. God says “I am going to put My laws into your emotions. I am going to give you godly desires that do not originate with your own humanity. I am going to put them in you.” When He writes His law on our heart, He inflames us in a beautiful and glorious way which inspires new emotions.

He says, “Then I am going to write them on your mind.” Look at this! He says, “I am going to write them with My finger,” and the analogy of the new covenant is that in the Old Testament when Moses and the children of Israel came out of Egypt through the Red Sea, they went to Mt. Sinai, and God wrote with His finger the ten commandments on stone. He writes with His finger, and He says, as it were, “That was only a precursor. I am actually showing you something you did not understand,” and, of course, Moses in that day could not have understood it. “I am going to write with My finger on your emotions, your heart. My fiery finger will set your

heart into new desires. And I am going to touch your mind and illuminate it with understanding." That is what He means when He says "I am going to write the name of My Father." Beloved, this is indescribably glorious! This is increased revelation, and of course it is in this age, but it really is increased in the age to come. Everyone in the age to come will have a different capacity of understanding, just like they do in this age. I want to persevere. I want the Lord to write the fullness of the Father's glory so that I desire it and I understand it more and more and more than I would have if I would have just had a passive relationship with the Lord.

- E. **Promise #5—I will write on him the name of the New Jerusalem:** This promise includes authority in the city, ability to better comprehend it, and possibly to have full access to all parts of the city.

Promise #5, He says "I am going to write the name"—not just write the name of the Father, give you desire and insight about the Father—"I am going to write on him the name of the New Jerusalem." Wow! What does that mean? This is given to those who persevere. This is given to overcomers. This is not automatic to every believer. Every believer has access to the city. I am sure that this is an imperfect analogy. It is an imperfect analogy, but today we have men and women that have noble deeds or heroic deeds in a city, and they have a big ceremony and give them the keys of the city, and in doing that they are saying, "We give you special recognition." Only a few people over the course of many years have been given the keys of a city. I mean every city has its own story, its own history. That means that they have a special place of honor. It means that they have special authority. They can move freely around the city in ways others cannot and with greater privileges and open doors.

I do not know what it means for God to write the name of the New Jerusalem, but it is to have an access to the city that is above and beyond what others have. It is an understanding of the city. I think even in the resurrection it will take us millions of years to comprehend the city. There will be so many facets and dynamics and glorious things that are spoken of her, and the Lord says, "I will write on your mind; I will write the name." When He writes the name of the city on you, He is giving you living understanding. He is giving you some kind of access that is greater freedom and liberty. I do not know what it means, but it is real. The reason it is real is because Jesus says, "If you will not quit, Philadelphia, I will do this." The implication is that if you do quit, it does not mean you are not in the kingdom, but this special privilege He will hold off and give to those who do not quit. And I do not know exactly what it is but I want it.

- F. **Promise #6—I will write on him My new name:** This promise includes receiving increased revelation of Jesus' name and nature as the God-Man as seen in Revelation 19:12.

Promise #6: Then He went on to say, "I will write My own new name on you." In Revelation 19:12, when Jesus comes back at the end of the Book of Revelation at the second coming, and He is coming up on the horse and He is coming as the mighty warrior King, it says "He will have a new name." And what that means is there will be things about His nature and His majesty of His deity and humanity that will be openly displayed on the earth in a way that it has never been openly displayed before, and there are new things about Him. He says, "I will have that new name," but here He says—before Revelation 19, as we are way back in chapter 3—He says, as it were, "I will tell you more later, but I am going to let you know about that name! I am going to show you things about Me that have never been revealed on the earth to people before." Again, every believer will have insight regarding Jesus and the Father. Every believer will have access to the city, but these are heightened points of privilege and honor.

I was going to say I do not know the fullness, but I really don't even know the first step of what they mean; they are so beyond what we are thinking. Paul says I Corinthians 2:9, "Such things have not ever entered the mind of a person." They are so glorious that it has never entered your mind how glorious they are. And so I look at

these and think, “I do not know, but I am going for it!” These are good. These are not like, “Well, I do not care about that. I have other things to do, you know.” This is what I am about, these things right here.

- G. **Promise #7—I will keep you from the hour of trial:** Jesus promised to “keep His people” spiritually vibrant and to protect them from falling away and to keep them from God’s wrath (1 Thes. 5:9).

¹⁰Because 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. (Rev. 3:10)

Promise #7: This is one of the most debated verses about the rapture, and I think it is commonly misapplied to the pre-tribulation rapture. I am very confident and clear that He is not talking about the pre-tribulation rapture in this passage. However, that is a little unfair to just throw it out when I have just two minutes to go, because some of you were raised in a background where this was the number one passage that people all use: Revelation 3:10 that we will avoid the hour of trouble.

And so I am going to do this at another time, particularly in context to my Wednesday night CBETS class because next semester we are coming into all of the New Testament passages and I want to spend some time on this. There is quite a bit on the internet on this verse that I believe is not the pre-tribulation rapture point of view here. However, He says this: “Because you have kept My commandment to persevere, because you did not quit, I am going to keep you from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole earth to test those who come upon the whole earth.”

I believe that there was a partial application of this during a period of persecution that came upon the whole known world of that day, the Roman Empire. That was only a partial application, and I believe that it affected more than Philadelphia, but even cities of Asia Minor and Italy and Syria and all around. There was an intense season of persecution, and it became more intense. However, it was a persecution that happened—here is the key—with the saints in Philadelphia’s lifetime, because this is a promise that has some application for their lifetime two thousand years ago. If this was the promise of the pre-tribulation rapture, then the condition “you must persevere to have this” means every believer in the known world, the most carnal believer. “Well, they avoided the tribulation” Well, of course! It was two thousand years later so that is why they avoided it. My point is that this commandment is given with a condition of persevering and had an application to believers in that day, but only the persevering would do that. Yet we know from scripture that when the rapture comes it is not only those that persevere in this heightened way, but it is for every believer. The most carnal believer will be raptured when the Lord comes; every single believer will be raptured. So it had its initial application in the day of the people who lived in Philadelphia, but I believe it will have an end-time application at the end of the age as well.

1. A partial application of the “hour of trial” spoke of a specific period in the first century in which persecution by the Roman Empire increased greatly in the known world.
2. This ultimate application of “being kept” refers to standing in victory by escaping the snares of sin and deception in the Great Tribulation pressures which will test the whole earth.” All the saints will not be exempt from all physical harm as many will be martyred. (Rev. 6:9-11).

³⁴Take heed...lest your hearts be weighed down...and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

³⁵For it will come as a snare on...the whole earth. ³⁶...Pray always that you may be counted worthy [prepared] to escape all these things [the snare of sin and deception] and to stand [in victory instead of falling away] before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:34-36)

- H. Two interpretations of “being kept” are in being **“protected spiritually in the midst of the trial”** or in being **“removed physical from the scene of the trial.”** One is a “spiritual keeping” that enables one to be victorious. The other is a “physical keeping” that takes them away from physical danger.

Here is the key phrase; here is the key issue: It is the word, “keep,” or “keep from.” The two most common interpretations—one is right and one is not right; and my view will be pretty clear which one it is—One is to be “kept” is to be preserved and to be kept in a vibrant spirituality without yielding to falling away from the faith, “being kept in that hour.” That is what I believe it means, to be “spiritually kept.” The other, as some have interpreted it, means to be removed physically.

I have written here the first interpretation, which I believe is the right one, is to be kept spiritually in the hour of great testing. The other is to be removed physically, and again I could give quite a few more statements on it but not tonight. However, there will be many martyrs of radically committed believers at the end of the age. The apostles were martyred two thousand years ago. They were not “kept” physically from trouble. The Church at the end of the age will face martyrdom. The Church in the First Century in Philadelphia faced martyrdom, and so it is not talking about being physically removed from having or facing persecution and danger.

- I. In John 17:15, Jesus did not pray that believers be removed from the scene but **“kept” or preserved in victory in the midst** of trouble by being enabled to stand strong before Satan’s attack. Jesus specifically asked that His disciples **not** be taken or removed from the world but to stand strong.

¹⁵I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (Jn. 17:15)

I believe that Jesus addressed this very issue right before He went to the cross, in John 17, when He was praying before the Father before the cross, that prayer just right before. In that prayer He said “Father,” John 17:15, “I do not pray that You take them out of the world”—I am not asking you to remove them physically—I am asking You to keep them spiritually from yielding to the evil one.” And so the keeping is a spiritual keeping. Having said that, every believer is kept from the wrath of God as well, but believers are not kept from persecution in a guaranteed way. Some believers are, but many believers are not, and so in this passage He is saying in reality here, “I will keep you.” Meaning, “I will release grace, and you will have a vibrant spirituality, and you will thrive spiritually, even in the face of the enemy’s attack. That is what I will do if you continue to persevere. I will give you grace to complete the journey with a vibrant spirituality.”

²⁴Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless... (Jude 24)

⁵Kept by the power of God through faith for salvation...revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:5)

Well, Jesus, we love Your leadership, we love who You are, and we say come and touch us! Lord, give us more living understanding of these glorious promises in Jesus name!

Amen and amen! Let’s stand before the Lord.