Session 6 Philadelphia (Part 1): Faithfulness to Jesus (Rev. 3:7-13)

7“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”: 8“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9Indeed 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. 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. 11Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12He 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. 13He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’” (Rev. 3:7-13)

1. the primary message
   1. The word of the Lord to the church at Philadelphia, like Smyrna, had no rebuke; only affirmations.
   2. The Church of Philadelphia faithfully obeyed God’s Word and persevered in much difficulty.
   3. Jesus’ primary message developed what He promised the disciples in John 14:21-23.

21“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved [open display of it] by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” 22Judas (not Iscariot) said, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him [openly display it], and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (Jn. 14:21-23)

* 1. This passage is based on the description that Isaiah gave of King Hezekiah’s chief leader, Shebna, being removed from his government position and replaced by Eliakim (Isa. 22:15­-25). God promised to place on Eliakim’s shoulder the key to the house of David so he could open and shut doors of authority to release kingdom activity.

22“The 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…25In that day…the peg [Eliakim’s position] that is fastened in the secure place will be removed…” (Isa. 22:22, 25)

1. the Church of Philadelphia

Ancient Philadelphia was on the site of modern day Alashehir at the juncture of trade routes. The imperial route from Rome passed through Philadelphia, thus giving it the name “the gateway to the East” and making it an important financial city. It was a prosperous city.

1. Jesus’ revelation of Himself

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)

* 1. This description reveals aspects of Jesus’ personality and ministry. This emphasizes His care for our lives and the way He intervenes in His ministry to help those persecuted and in difficulty.
  2. ***He who is holy***: as a man, Jesus was holy, fully set apart, to seek and obey the Father. Thus, He understands what it means to walk out costly commitments among sinful people on earth. As God, He is transcendent (wholly other than) or infinitely superior to all. Thus, He is worth it.
  3. ***He who is true***: reliable and genuine in His promises in Rev. 3:12 that are so extravagant, they seem too good to be true. Before He reveals these promises, He declares He is true.
  4. ***He has the key of David***: He is the ultimate king in David’s lineage, having authority over all the promises God gave David and all the nations in the millennial kingdom. Jesus opens the door to positions in the eternal kingdom. In the age to come, Jesus chooses who receives which positions of authority with the key of David. He has authority over the nations now (Mt. 28:19).
  5. Jesus has the keys of the kingdom (Mt. 16:19) and keys over death and Hades (demonic realms).

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

* 1. ***He who opens***: Jesus is He who opens all doors to us.
     1. He opens doors of opportunity, influence, and ministry (Acts 14:27; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3) as He opened a wide door for effective service in Ephesus for Paul (1 Cor. 16:8-9).

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

* + 1. Jesus opens the doors in the spirit that give us access to the revelation of God’s heart.

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

* + 1. Jesus opens the scroll of God’s end-time purposes that are in the Father’s hand.

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

* + 1. Jesus will open heaven and release angels to ascend and descend. Jesus has the keys to call the New Jerusalem down to earth because He kept God’s Word (Rev. 3:12)

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

* + 1. Jesus opens prison doors as He did for Peter (Acts 12:7-10) and Paul (Acts 16:27). Jesus will open the bottomless pit to shut Satan in prison for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).
  1. Jesus has such great authority, yet He waits for us to open our heart. This is the one door Jesus will not open unless we open it with Him (Rev. 3:20).

20“I 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)

* 1. ***He who shuts and no one opens***: Jesus will show forth two aspects of His ministry to churches like Philadelphia, who live in deep obedience. Our enemies seek to open doors of hostility and resistance against us, but cannot if Jesus shuts the door. Saul, with 3,000 soldiers, could not stop God’s will in David’s life (1 Sam. 24:2; 26:2). Neither men, nor demons, nor the Antichrist has the power to shut the doors that Jesus opens. Jesus opens up the hearts of others (Prov. 21:1).
  2. Jesus shuts doors until their proper time. Paul sought to preach in Asia and Bithynia, but was forbidden by the Spirit (Acts 16:6-7). He shut the doors to Asia and Bithynia, but opened them in Macedonia. Paul promised to come to Corinth if the Lord would permit it (1 Cor. 16:5-7).

1. AFfirmation for faithfulness

8“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name…10You have kept My command to persevere.” (Rev. 3:8, 10)

* 1. ***You have kept My word***: this is the greatest affirmation that we can receive (Jn. 14:21-23). Jesus now promises to openly reveal His love to them; giving a great example of His extravagant commitment to openly reveal His love for the faithful in Revelation 3:12.

21“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (Jn. 14:21)

* 1. ***You have not denied My name and kept My command to persevere***: faithful in persecution
  2. ***You have a little strength***: they operated in the true power of the Holy Spirit.
  3. ***See, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it***: there are several applications to this as Jesus offers us positions of honor in the Millennium. He also offers to open doors of opportunity and ministry now as well as doors in the spirit that give us access to the revelation of God’s heart. He will occasionally open the heavens to release angels as He opens the scrolls of God’s end-time purposes. He will even open prison doors for some in times of persecution.

1. Correction for compromise: none

It is noteworthy that the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only ones in Revelation 2-3 to receive no correction and were also the only ones afflicted by a “synagogue of Satan.” The pressure of a demonically energized congregation of people who attacked them created the opportunity for them to be transformed by the Holy Spirit.

1. exhortation to respond (with a warning)

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

* 1. ***I am coming quickly***: Jesus comes to His Church to evaluate it in specific prophetic seasons.
  2. ***Hold fast what you have***: we must hold on to the same measure of obedience that we are currently walking in or have walked in previously.
  3. ***That no one may take your crown***: to lose eternal reward that they potentially could have gained. We let people take our crown by yielding to their unbiblical exhortations about compromise.

8Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. (2 Jn. 8; NIV)

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

* 1. The crown of life is the crown that receives and releases the anointing of God’s life. This is a crown that comes from persevering in righteousness in the fight of our faith (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

12Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jas. 1:12)

1. Promise for overcomers: five promises

9“Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie––indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 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…12He 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. 13He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Rev. 3:9-13)

* 1. ***I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you***: the Father will reveal to the nations the fact that He loves His people. These unbelieving Jews will actually witness the love of Jesus towards these people on the last day. False Jews along with the unbelieving Gentiles will pay homage before true believers in the millennial kingdom (Isa. 45:14; 49:23; 60:14; Zech. 8:20-23). They will bow their knee to Jesus in the presence of the people they persecuted in the first century.

14The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at…your feet; and they shall call you The City of the Lord. (Isa. 60:14)

23“I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)

* 1. ***The synagogue of Satan***: where Satan moved in unusual power. Many physical descendants of Abraham claimed to be Jews but were not, because in rejecting Jesus, they were of their father the devil (Jn. 8:41-47). Two references to a “synagogue of Satan” were in context to the two churches without any correction (Smyrna and Philadelphia). The synagogue of Satan is where the Jews denied Jesus’ divinity and resurrection, and persecuted those who believed in Him. They considered that His miracles were done by the devil. This was “the blasphemy” of the Spirit.
  2. ***I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth***: this is to be kept, or spiritually protected, from evil in the end times. Jesus will keep us or preserve us. The “hour of trial” is a specific period of time in the first century in which trials increased in persecution as a down payment of the Great Tribulation. Ultimately, this trial will affect all who dwell on the whole earth, not just the church of Philadelphia. It had a partial application in Rome’s persecution of the known world, as it prophetically points to the whole world in the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21).
  3. The two main interpretations of being kept are that we are preserved in the midst of trouble or removed from the scene. One is a spiritual keeping, enabling us to be faithful in our obedience; the other is a physical keeping, taking us away from physical danger.
  4. John recorded these very words of Jesus in John 17:15. Jesus did not ask that believers be removed from the scene, but kept in victory in the midst of trouble, by being enabled to stand strong before Satan’s attack. Jesus clarified that He did not want His disciples removed from the earthly scene, referring to the grace to not yield to unfaithfulness.

15“I 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)

13Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day…16taking the shield of faith…able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (Eph. 6:13-16)

* 1. Jesus promises spiritual protection, which will include physical protection, as He supernaturally shields them, in the midst of the fire of His judgment, or causes His judgment to pass by a geographic area. The ultimate protection is against their crown of victory being lost (v. 11).
  2. The Church will be on earth in these difficult days of Satan’s rage bringing persecution, but the Church will be kept from this hour of trial, which is Jesus’ judgment coming on the whole unbelieving world. “Those who live on the earth” (Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8) refers to the Church’s enemies. The hour of trial is directed towards the entire non-Christian world, but believers will be kept from it—not by the rapture, which will not occur at this time, but by spiritual protection against the forces of evil.
  3. Pretribulation-rapture teaching sees this as being removed from the earth during the Tribulation by the rapture. They see this as being kept from a specific time period of trouble on earth instead of yielding to compromise in sin or persecution.
  4. Some see this as a promise of being exempt from “the hour of trial.” The apostles walked in the trials as all church history has. It seems inconceivable that when the Church is the most purified and glorified in all of history, it would be exempt from being proven faithful in enduring attack.
  5. The Philadelphian church was faithful in a present trial, and thus Jesus will be faithful to them in the time of greater trial. If the Church is raptured before the trouble comes, we are left with the problem of answering why so many saints are martyred during the Great Tribulation. If God’s plan is to allow martyrdom of the saints, then why would the Church be taken away in this hour?
  6. All the saints in the Tribulation will not be exempt from all physical harm of Satan’s rage, as many will be martyred (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-14). However, they will be kept from God’s judgments (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9, 14; 9:21; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 16:5-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; Mt. 10:21-22, 28; 24:9; Lk. 12:4-7; 21:16-19; Jn. 15:18-16:4).
  7. We are not afraid of physical death because it holds no eternal significance to us. Our great reward is the power to love and be loyal in the midst of persecution and temptation. This promise assured the faithful who had endured persecution that they would receive even greater grace to avoid failure during the hour of trial. The greatest joy and desire of the end times is to be found faithful. They were encouraged to bear their present difficulties, knowing it was preparing them for the anointing of God to walk in greater faithfulness in the time of greater difficulty.
  8. ***I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more***: to be a pillar is a position of honor and authority in the millennial kingdom. Pillars stood for stability and brought beauty. All believers are part of God’s spiritual temple (Eph. 2:21-22), but some will be pillars who hold a position of authority, responsibility, and honor in the Millennium. Jesus promised them that they would never be removed from their place of honor. In Isaiah 22:15-25, Eliakim was fastened like a peg in a firm place (v. 23) to bear the weight of his father’s house (v. 24), yet, in time, his position would come to an end (v. 25).

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

* 1. ***I will write on him the name of My God***: to have the name of God on us means that we are recipients of His desire, authority, partnership, and revelation of His heart and beauty.
  2. ***I will write on him the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God***: authority in the city and ability to comprehend it.
  3. ***I will write on him My new name***: revelation of Jesus’ heart and beauty.

1. the time period prophetically spoken of by this Church

The church of Philadelphia prophetically points to the missionary Church that approximately covered 1750–1930, which was the time of the greatest revivals and missionary movements into foreign lands.

The “you” refers specifically to the church of Philadelphia in the first century being supernaturally protected when persecution broke out on the whole known world of the Roman Empire, whereas the “he who overcomes” refers to any overcomer throughout history.