

Daily Bible Study

“Seven Letters ~ Philadelphia”

Revelation 3:7-13

March 23 – March 29, 2014

MONDAY – In our study we have seen the loveless church of Ephesus, the persecuted church in Smyrna, the compromising church in Pergamos, the corrupt church in Thyatira, the dead church in Sardis and now the faithful church in Philadelphia. Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only churches among the seven Jesus doesn't reprove. There is a stern tone because He is speaking of real serious facts. Notice again His intimate knowledge of His people and His guidance and watch care over them. He speaks of the testing *hour of trial* and that He will keep these faithful saints from it. Is this a reference to the last great tribulation? In hindsight we can ask, was John mistakenly expecting that event to be imminent or was He speaking about a merely localized persecution? Could this be the perennial struggle of the Christian life, a struggle that all the specific and particular trials including the very last represent? Apart from Jesus, the church has no great strength of her own to meet trials with. But the true church must be encouraged, for we will overcome by The Lord's strength, remaining faithful, holding fast to the crown which He gave us. Also, while we walk through difficulty in this life we find that not only do we face opposition but with that we have opportunity. Read: **Revelation 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.”*⁹ *Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”*¹⁰ *Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”*¹¹ *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”*¹² *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”*¹³ *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, teach me that You are able to keep me from all harm and do whatever You wish. Help me hear, trust, obey and hold fast as I live out this earthly life.*

TUESDAY – **Revelation 3:7-8**: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’”*: *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.” Philadelphia was located about 30 miles to the southeast of Sardis and about 60 miles east of Smyrna. It is still a town of considerable size, called Allahshehr, “the city of God.” The city was founded in 140 B.C. by Attalus the Second. His surname was Philadelphus, and out of love for his brother Eumenes he called the city Philadelphia, city of brotherly love. Located very strategically along a highway that linked the east (Asia) with the west (Europe) it was a city with an open door through which trade, business commerce, Greek language and culture passed. The gospel also passed through this open door as Jesus' words *“I have set before you an open door”* remind us. This phrase was understood by the faithful Christians who spread the gospel. The soil around the city was volcanic ash and very fertile and fields were covered with vineyards known for wines. The volcanic ash was result from earthquake activity that often came on this area. In A.D.17 a severe earthquake devastated the city and Emperor Tiberius exempted Philadelphia from paying taxes. He donated money to be used to rebuild. The people however were afraid of all the tremors and preferred to live outside the city rather than inside and this also is alluded to by Jesus words in **verse 12**, *and he shall go out no more*. One more interesting fact about Jesus' words relating to His people in a personal, intimate way is this: The city wanted to honor the emperor for his financial bailout so they adopted the name *Neocaesarea* (the city of the new Caesar). About 30 years later, to honor Emperor Vespasian, the city renamed itself “Flavia” and had a temple for emperor worship. His full name was Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus. Again, Jesus' promise, *And I will write on him My new name* was very meaningful to these Christians. The saints were models of faithfulness to Jesus; *for you...have kept My word, and have not denied My name*. History indicates the church in Philadelphia remained true to Jesus through the centuries, even when Islam became the dominant area religion. According to William Hendriksen; “In the first part of the twentieth century, five Christian congregations were still flourishing in Philadelphia. Of all the seven churches in the province of Asia, only the one in Philadelphia has spanned the centuries.”

Suggestion for Prayer: *Lord, thanks for Your promising and bringing to rest to Your people. You have been faithful to us and for that we praise You and thank You.*

WEDNESDAY – **Revelation 3:7-9**: *“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. 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.”* Jesus calls Himself the one who *is holy* and *true* in our text and He desires His people to cherish both holiness and truth. Scripture teaches God is holy and expects His people to be holy (**Leviticus 11:45, 19:2, 20:7**). God is the Holy One (**Isaiah 40:25, Habakkuk 3:3**), but here Jesus is called holy. Both demons and disciples acknowledged that fact about Jesus (**Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34, John 6:69**). In

the NT, Revelation most often calls God's people the holy ones. We have indeed been cleansed by His blood, and have entrance into God's very presence through Jesus. We are His bride from whom He is removing spot, blemish, and wrinkle (**Ephesians 5:26-27**). Jesus also *has the key of David* and He opens and shuts doors and none can overpower Him. This direct reference to His messianic lineage is drawn from **Isaiah 22:22**, "*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.*" In Isaiah this is said to Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who served King Hezekiah as a faithful steward. Eliakim received royal emblems of authority such as a robe and the key of David's dynasty. He ruled over the house of David, Jerusalem, and Judah and was a pointer to the Messiah. We saw last week Jesus holds the scepter of authority of God's kingdom and is the Son over His house (**Hebrews 1:8, 3:6**), and rules over all people. *Key* is singular and has a definite article; it is **THE KEY**. Jesus holds the keys of Death and Hades (**1:18**) but here is seen as the one and only who holds absolute authority with that royal key of David. He is the absolute supreme ruler in heaven and on earth (**Matthew 28:18**) and His word is final. We must interpret this *shutting of doors* in context and in light of **verse 9**. The Jews in Philadelphia were strongly opposed to the admission of Gentiles into the fellowship of the Kingdom; the very body of Christ. But as Jesus said in **Matthew 8:12**, it was the ethnic Jews themselves who were shut out of the kingdom of God although they considered themselves God's chosen people. As mentioned earlier the "*open door*" was the opportunity to spread the gospel of Jesus which these believers did. The Greek text indicates that this door has been opened and remains open although obviously the Lord can shut it. The Lord has to open the door to make the work of evangelism possible and effective. Paul and Barnabas reported to the church in Antioch how God "*had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*" (**Acts 14:27**). God opens the door to enter His presence through Jesus and no one is able to shut it. Wherever He opens for His workers, He blesses their work of presenting the gospel (**1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Colossians 4:3**). In the face of hostile and strong opposition by the Jews in the *synagogue of Satan* (**verse 9**), or anyone for that matter, God's people can be assured of His blessing when He opens the door. "*for you have a little strength...*" Jesus said they have *little strength* and were insignificant in the eyes of others but Jesus always encouraged His sheep "*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom*" (**Luke 12:32**). This little group of believers *kept My word, and have not denied My name*. They guarded the truth of Jesus and His gospel and made His word known (**John 8:51, 1 John 2:5**). Jesus would use the enemies of His gospel as instruments for His purpose and glory. As promised they would be brought down and acknowledge Jesus and His people (**Isaiah 49:23, 60:14**).

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me even in the face of opposition to keep Your word and be faithful to Your name and proclaim Your gospel to all people letting You be the judge.

THURSDAY – Revelation 3:10-11: ¹⁰ "*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those*

who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*" This portion that has many interpretations we'll discuss more this Lord's Day. Suffice to say, **Because** His people endured suffering like Himself, Jesus helps them (**Hebrews 2:18**). Furthermore, in Jesus' prayer of **John 17:15** He doesn't ask God to take believers out of this world but rather that God would *keep them from the evil one*. In context of this opposition from the world toward these believers we find God sends His people into the hostile world to proclaim Jesus and He will preserve them in the *hour of trial*. The word *hour* is not limited to sixty minutes but rather a period of time. *Trial* can mean temptation, testing, or *trial* which fits the context; adversities, afflictions, and troubles that God is sending to his people to test their faith, holiness, and character. God is testing them, permitting Satan to tempt them. Christians overcome through God's power and are strengthened in their faith. *those who dwell on the earth* is a reference to unbelievers, as is evident from numerous passages in Revelation where it signifies the persecutors and enemies of believers. God will test the unbelievers who persecute his people and will find them wanting (**Daniel 5:27**). Concluding, the term *trial* and the verb *to test* point to both believers and unbelievers. Schuyler Brown comments, "For Christians this tribulation, besides being a threat to their physical safety, will also be a test of their faith, which, by the Lord's help, they will be able to withstand. For the enemies of the church, however, whether Jews or Gentiles, it will come as the deserved punishment for their wickedness."

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me obey and trust that You will deliver me from evil.

FRIDAY – Revelation 3:12-13: ¹² *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.* ¹³ *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* Notice the possessive pronoun *My* that precedes the noun *God* four times and the new name of Jesus once. We see both Jesus' subordination to His Father (**John 20:17**) and the authority He has received to *write his new name* on His people. Jesus promises to make the believer *a pillar in the temple of My God*. This means believers are honored within the heavenly temple, nothing less than in the very presence of God. Although people in Philadelphia often went out the city walls in fear of earthquakes, by contrast, God's children abide safely forever in his presence (**21:3**). *I will write on him...* John elsewhere points this out saying the names of the Lamb and the Father are written on the foreheads of the saints (**14:1, 22:4**) while unbelievers bear the name and the number of the beast (**13:17–18**). Believers were first called Christians in Antioch (**Acts 11:26**) and the world mocks the name but in the new Jerusalem, the Christian receives Christ's new name and it will no longer be mocked but honored and revered.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thanks for loving me so much that You would save, forgive, protect and one day bring me fully and physically into Your presence to enjoy You forever.