

THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA

TEXT: REVELATION 3:7—13

Introduction:

1. The church in Philadelphia is one of the two churches (the other being Smyrna) with which the Lord finds no particular fault. There is no word of condemnation, only commendation.
2. This church is not told to repent (cf. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3, 19).
3. Our Lord addresses the church as “He that is holy, He that is true” (3:7). These are divine attributes.
4. Romans 3:4 says, “Let God be true, but every man a liar.”
5. First John 5:20 says, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”
6. In Isaiah 57:15, God says His name is Holy.
7. First Peter 1:15, 16 says, “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
8. In Revelation 6:10, the Lord is called “holy and true.” These divine attributes belong to Christ because the Lord Jesus Christ is God.
9. Christ has “the key of David” (Rev. 3:7). He is of the lineage of King David, and one day He will return to earth to rule and reign from David’s throne in Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-31).

I. AN OPEN DOOR (3:8, 9)

1. The church in Philadelphia is the church of the open door (3:8). There are two ways to look at this open door. First, the Lord had given them (and us) an open door for service.
2. The Bible speaks often of an open door for ministry, for soulwinning, for evangelism, for missions, for preaching, etc.
3. The apostle Paul wrote, “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (I Cor. 16:9).
4. Paul also wrote in I Corinthians 2:12, “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord.”
5. And in Colossians 4:3, “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.”
6. There is another way to look at this open door. It is a door of deliverance from the Great Tribulation (3:10).

7. In Revelation 4:1 we read, “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (cf. Rev. 1:19).
8. I will say more about this in a few minutes.
9. The church in Philadelphia had but “a little strength,” but they had kept God’s word, and had not denied His name (Rev. 3:8).
10. Beloved, we do not need much strength. The apostle Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).
11. William Carey, the great Baptist missionary to India, said, “I can plod.” He is often referred to as the “father of modern missions.”
12. In fact, those who see in the seven letters a prophetic picture of the church age – from the apostolic to the apostate – see Philadelphia as representative of the great missions era.
13. William Carey knew that God had given him an open door in India. When Carey went before the Baptist leaders of England to discuss the need to evangelize foreign lands, he was told, “Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid and mine.”
14. But Carey was not discouraged because he knew God had given him an open door “and no man can shut it” (Rev. 3:8).
15. One biographer wrote, “He, with a few contemporaries, was almost single-handed in conquering the prevailing indifference and hostility to missionary effort; Carey developed a plan for missions, and printed his amazing *Enquiry Into the Obligations of the Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*; he influenced timid and hesitating men to take steps to the evangelizing of the world.”
16. William Carey first became burdened for missions while reading the *Last Voyage of Captain Cook*. To most readers, Cook’s journal was a thrilling story of adventure, but to William Carey it was a call to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond. He then began to read every book that had any bearing on the subject.
17. At the age of 21, Carey had already mastered Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Italian, and was working on Dutch and French.
18. William Carey pastored a small church, and like many Baptist pastors, he had to work a second job. He was a cobbler – he worked on shoes.
19. Friends called his shoemaker’s workshop “Carey’s College,” for when he cobbled shoes he always had a book before him.
20. Carey preached a message on missions entitled, “EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD. ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD.”
21. William Carey knew he could attempt great things for God because God had given him an open door.

22. In 1793, William Carey left England for India. At first his wife was reluctant to go — so Carey set off to go nevertheless, but after two returns from the docks to persuade her again, his wife Dorothy and their children accompanied him.
23. When William Carey and his family arrived in India, the East India Company would not allow them to stay in the part of India governed by England, so Carey was forced to leave. He then moved 18 miles up the Ganges River to a Danish colony and began his work.
24. There were years of discouragement (no Indian convert for seven years), debt, disease, deterioration of his wife’s mind, death, but by the grace of God, Carey continued because God gave him an open door in India.
25. When he died in 1834 at the age of 73, William Carey had seen the Scriptures translated and printed into forty languages, he had been a college professor, and had founded a college at Serampore. He had seen India open its doors to missionaries, he had seen a law passed prohibiting *sati* (burning widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands), and he had seen many converts for Christ.
26. God is still opening doors today (Rev. 3:8).
27. But as the apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 16:9, “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.”
28. The adversaries in Philadelphia were from “the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not” (3:9).
29. Let me be frank: any religion that denies salvation through Jesus Christ alone is Satanic. This Satanic opposition includes religious ritualism, hypocrisy, worldliness, and many false doctrines. But our Lord said to the church of Philadelphia, “Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” This is the blessing of the open door.

II. KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION (3:10)

1. “The hour of temptation” refers to the tribulation period, which will immediately follow the rapture. We will be kept from it.
2. Titus 2:12, 13 says we are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, “**Looking for that blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”
3. Daniel 9:27 says the antichrist (“the prince that shall come” – 9:26) shall confirm a covenant with Israel “for one week.”
4. But this will be a week of years, and in the midst of the week, i.e., after three and a half years, the antichrist will defile the temple in Jerusalem.

5. The apostle Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:4 that the antichrist (“that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” – 2:3) will sit in the temple, shewing himself that he is God.
6. In I Thessalonians 5:9, Paul writes, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” I take this to mean we will be raptured before the tribulation.
7. Likewise, I Thessalonians 1:10 says we are “to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”
8. Some say that this refers to hell. Yes, it does refer to hell but it also refers to the tribulation, which is repeatedly referred to as the time when God will pour out His wrath on this Christ-rejecting, sin-loving world (cf. Rev. 6:12-17).
9. Here in Revelation 3:10, our Lord tells the church at Philadelphia, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”
10. Some Bible teachers say our Lord has promised to keep us “from” the tribulation, but not out of the tribulation. But I believe these teachers are wrong. We will be kept from it and raptured out before it starts.
11. Those who will be left behind during the tribulation are referred to here as “them that dwell upon the earth” (3:10). This group of unregenerate sinners is referred to often in the book of Revelation.
12. Revelation 8:13 says, “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth.” Three woes upon these wicked Christ-rejecting sinners!
13. Revelation 12:12 says, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”
14. These sin-loving inhabitants of the earth will go through the tribulation. According to II Thessalonians 2:11, God will send them a strong delusion.
15. Revelation 13:8 says they will worship the antichrist. Revelation 13:4 says they will worship “the dragon (the devil) which gave power unto the beast.”
16. In Revelation 2 & 3 we have the seven letters to the seven churches. Then comes the rapture. Revelation 4 & 5 takes place in heaven. Revelation 6—19 deals with the tribulation and there is no mention of the church.
17. This is because the church will be kept out of the tribulation (Rev. 3:10).
18. We must reject any view that places the church in the tribulation – partial rapture, mid-tribulation, post-tribulation, and the more recent (and totally unscriptural) “pre-wrath rapture” view.

III. JESUS IS COMING QUICKLY (3:11).

1. “Quickly” here means suddenly and unexpectedly. To the dead church in Sardis it was a warning (3:3), but to the faithful church in Philadelphia it was a promise of blessing.
2. The “crown” refers to rewards at the judgment seat of Christ, which will immediately follow the rapture.
3. The apostle Paul wrote in II Timothy 4:8, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”
4. Do you “love His appearing”? Paul said, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (II Tim. 4:10).
5. I have known quite a few people like Demas in my lifetime.
6. Do not be like Demas. Be an “overcomer” (Rev. 3:12). The way to victory is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. First John 5:4 says, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”
7. “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

CONCLUSION:

1. I mentioned the great preacher and shoe cobbler William Carey, who went off to India as a missionary.
2. The more William Carey read and studied, the more convinced he was “the peoples of the world need Christ.” He studied and read. He made notes, and he made a great leather map of the world.
3. One day, in the quietness of his cobbler’s shop, William Carey heard the call: “If it be the duty of all men to believe the Gospel ... then it be the duty of those who are entrusted with the Gospel to endeavor to make it known among all nations.”
4. It was then that William Carey cried out to God, “Here I am, Lord; send me!”
5. And God gave him an open door.
6. God has given us an open door as well. Let us go forward while we can.