



10. Revelation 3:7-13 – The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:7-13 – The Church at Philadelphia

Philadelphia was sited where the modern city of Alashehir stands today. This city was regarded as commercially important and was located as the gateway to the high central plateau of the Roman Province of Asia in Asia Minor – modern-day Turkey. The word Philadelphia literally means 'brotherly love'. The city was given that name in honour of its founders – two brothers, Attalus II and Eumenes II.

Philadelphia may have held the key to the entrance to the Province of Asia, but here, Jesus reminds His readers that the One Who holds the real key of access to the things that really matter is Jesus Himself, whose human ancestry can be traced back to David and beyond, but Who was promised to the world as the One Who would usher in the opportunity for all men to be saved. He holds the Keys to Death and Hell as well as the Keys to Heaven, and what He opens can be shut by no one, and what He shuts no one can open, **Revelation 3:8**

Men may temporarily hold the key of access to physical locations and resources, but God eternally holds the key to the things that really matter. Who do we trust? If one promise in the Bible is untrue, then we may as well throw the entire Book away. A banknote is underwritten by the Central Bank of the Country of which it is the currency so that the promise to pay the face value of the note is reliable and true, but it is far more reliable to trust in the promises underwritten by God in His Word. Every promise is true. God may be held accountable and reliable as the One who will back these promises. Sometimes we do feel that God has let us down and that He has not kept His promises, but we need to recognise that God never makes mistakes. We may not understand what is happening or see the bigger picture, but remember "In all this, Job did not sin in what he said." **Job 2:10**. So keep praising God, showing Him that whatever is happening, we will keep trusting Him. In the fullness of time we will understand God's way of doing things.



Jesus understood exactly where the Church in Philadelphia stood regarding their belief and faith in Him. Nothing can be hidden from Him (**Psalms 139**) so we must never try to pretend we are something that we are not. God knows the truth! God had placed before the Philadelphian Christians an open door, probably to the Kingdom of Heaven. Christians always have access to the Kingdom of Heaven twenty four seven. No one can prevent us from living in Heaven on Earth. It is our right, our duty to do so, and the Believers in Philadelphia were taking part to the full. He saw their willingness and so Jesus opened doors of opportunities for them, which no power on earth could shut. These Believers may not have been strong in the faith, but **they had kept God's Word and had not denied His Name**. Life saving!

This is so encouraging. When we feel weak we can just hold onto His Word and never deny His Name. Just keep speaking the Word out of our mouth and we will create what God has promised. Don't forget the power of the tongue! Think about Sarah shouting out loud for Abraham, 'father of many nations!', before he ever had Isaac, she spoke by faith, **Romans 4:17**. All saints are under His control.

Every Christian should have a good working knowledge of the Word of God obtained by prayerful study. It is their birthright and their duty in order to know their Master's Voice. It is vital to know the Word of God. It gives the Believer security against believing false teaching and many so-called prophecies, visions and dreams that purport to be the truth, but are in reality little more than the result of human thought. This is not speaking about real teaching, prophecies and dreams. These exist and only the knowledge of the Word of God will help us to rightly distinguish the true from the false.

The Bible was never intended to be merely read, rather to be spoken out and to be studied so that the Holy Spirit can reveal the most amazing truths from it into our spirits. In order to learn the Word of God we should meditate (speak it out) day and night (**Joshua 1:8**). It may seem hard and unnecessary to learn the Word of God, but for those Believers who live under persecution in many parts of the world, this may be the only access to the Word of God that they have in prison, or hiding out. In order to understand what God is saying to us through His Word, we do not need to be a scholar or a theologian, we just need to be close to the Holy Spirit.

For those of us who rely on the Word of God, making it our source of wisdom, Jesus says that He will confound the Satanic opposition making them fall down at our feet having to acknowledge that Jesus loves us. There is nothing that Satan hates more than a person who knows and understands the Word of God. Such a person cannot be duped and confounded by the father of lies. Instead of becoming bitter when people come against us who say they are Christians we need to keep our heart's right and show God's love praying for them faithfully. Do we know and apply the Word or are we lazy with the Word? What are we challenged to do in order to learn more about Jesus' instructions to us? These Believers in the Philadelphian Church had obeyed Jesus' command to endure with patience. They had judged themselves and had lined their lives up with the instructions of the Living God, and it was in this letter that Jesus gave them a promise that is truly remarkable and revealing, **Revelation 3:10-11**:

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

The 'hour of trial' refers to the Tribulation Period which is coming on the earth universally. Jesus states that He will keep the Believers **from** that time. The hour of trial is not an hour. An hour as used here refers to a specific time period. As we shall see in both the Book of Daniel and later in the Book of Revelation, it is clear that this 'hour' refers to a seven year time period which is coming on the earth to test those present at the time.

The Church (the Believers) will not be tried or tested during this period because it is already undergoing trials. This is a great example of all situations being under His control. The Lord is certainly in control of all Believers and over whoever may come to power and defy God's rule. The Father still has the ultimate control. God's greatest desire is to find weak Christians who have very little strength left and feel they can't go on; He wants to give them His directions about things in secret places and see them win through so that He can give them the victor's crown. Paul states in his first letter to the Corinthians:

"But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world." **1 Corinthians 11:31-32**.

The standard we use to judge ourselves is none other than the Word of God.

"For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." **Hebrews 4:12-13**.

All men will be judged, our measuring stick is the Word of God which is the judge of the intents of our heart. Peter states that "judgement must begin at the House of God." **1 Peter 4:17 KJV**. Our just God judges us, His children, by having us judge ourselves daily with the Word. Also when we stand before God, Jesus will speak for us as He is our advocate, our Saviour and Redeemer so He has paid the price in full for all we owe, which is amazing.

If, as some say the Tribulation which is coming to test those who dwell on the earth, and it is designed for the perfection of the Believers, then it violates the teachings of Paul.

¹¹ "So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”
Ephesians 4:11-16

So we can easily see that it is by ministry that the Church will become glorious, spiritually mature and ready to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Certainly tribulation or persecution can produce such a result of maturity. God passionately wants us to learn from His Word and walk in His Spirit and be guided by Him every moment. From this, we may understand that the Church (the Believers) will be caught up before the Tribulation begins.

If this is true, and we are alive when Jesus returns for His Body (the Church), then we should understand that this will happen before the Tribulation Period. People who believe this are called 'Pre-Tribulationists'. There are those, however who believe that the Church will go through the first part (three and a half years) of the Tribulation Period and are known as 'Mid-Tribulationists', then there are those who believe that the Church will be on the earth during the entire Tribulation Period before being caught up to meet the Lord in the air and they are known as 'Post-Tribulationists'. We shall have ample opportunity to discuss all these positions again, as we continue our studies.

Paul also reveals that the Lord will present to Himself a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **Ephesians 5:27.**

In the Church at Philadelphia, Jesus promises that those who overcome will be pillars in the Temple of God.

¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² Those who are victorious I will make pillars in the Temple of My God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God; and I will also write on them My new name. ¹³ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” **Revelation 3:11-13**

We are to behave as victorious overcomers, daughters of the King; we are more than conquerors in Him who loves us and gave Himself for us. Even though they had little strength this is all God needs to make them into Temple pillars. This is the very symbol of strength; solidarity, grandeur, and stability.

“My strength is made perfect in weakness” **2 Corinthians 12:9.**

Those who are victorious will never again leave God's Presence. What an amazing reward for those who have patiently kept God's Word and have never denied His Name. Those whose destination is the Kingdom of Heaven will be identified by the Name of God which is sealed into His Promise. The overcomers will receive three markings. First, “I will write on him the Name of My God” **Revelation 3:12.** What could be greater than that? Second, “I will write upon him the name of the city of My God...” The overcomer is eternally identified with the New Jerusalem. Where they come from will be written all over them. Thirdly “I will write on him My new Name.” The overcomer in Philadelphia will be covered in God's Glory. What that really looks like we have to wait for the time of the New Jerusalem.

How will it be with you? Have we got the perseverance and the patience to remain faithful to Jesus through trials and difficulties, opposition and ridicule in our lives? If not, then will we reconsider our position and rely on the promises of Jesus to carry us through? Surely just a little determination and perseverance will be worthwhile as we fix our eyes upon Jesus! What wonderful promises we have here to encourage us, it will all be worth it.

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the Cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” **Hebrews 12:1-3**

Revelation 3:7-13 – The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia – Challenge Questions

- 1. Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and be prepared to share in your group.
2. Why do you think the Church at Philadelphia had 'little strength'? Is that description relevant today?
3. What do you think of the promises to the overcomers in the Church at Philadelphia?

Read Revelation 3:14-22 – The Letter to the Church in Laodicea.

4. Who is 'the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation' as described in Verse 14?
5. How was the deeds of the Laodiceans described here, and how is their character shown from their deeds?
6. Why did Jesus wish that they were either hot or cold? What did He threaten to do to them, and why?
7. **Personal.** Spend some time talking with Jesus about your relationship with Him. How would Jesus describe you on a scale of 1 (Cold) to 10 (Hot)? Do you need to do anything about your situation? If so, what do you need to do? When do you need to do it?
8. What was Laodicea renowned for, and why do you think that the Laodicean Church said that they were rich, had acquired wealth and didn't need a thing?
9. Was this correct or was it 'stinking thinking'? Do you need to realign your thinking in this area?
10. Jesus knew that their lives did not reflect what they said about themselves. How did He see their lives?
11. Jesus instructed the Laodicean Church to buy certain things from Him. What were they and why did He suggest such items?

- 12.** How would they have changed the Church's life? Do we need to buy certain things from Jesus?
- 13.** Jesus said that He rebukes and disciplines those He loves. Is that still true today?
- 14.** Is all rebuke and discipline painful? Explain your answer.
- 15.** Jesus encourages the Laodicean Church to be earnest and repent. What does He require here? **Revelation 3:19**
- 16.** Were the members of the Laodicean Church Christians? And what was Jesus' purpose in using such a picture to them? **Revelation 3:20**
- 17.** What promises did He make to those who were overcomers?
- 18.** What is the Spirit saying to the Churches through this letter? Do you think that what Jesus is saying in this letter applies to our Churches today?
- 19.** Describe in a single sentence how this study of the seven Churches has affected you and your Christian life.