

Revelation 3:7-13

To the Church at Philadelphia

<p>[7] To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:</p>	<p>1. The Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philadelphia 	<p>[Reminder: The word "church," as used here, may include people who <i>claim</i> to be Christian, but who really aren't. (This doesn't seem to be much of a problem for the church at Philadelphia.)]</p>
<p>These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David.</p> <p>What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.</p>	<p>2. About Christ</p> <p>Two character qualities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy (set apart from all that is evil and impure) • True (real, genuine) <p>He has all power and authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He has the "key" that makes it available. • What he does for his servants <i>cannot</i> be undone by his enemies. 	<p><u>Holy and True</u> Throughout this letter, these two character qualities are evident in the lives of the Christians at Philadelphia.</p> <p><u>Key of David</u> (An allusion to Isaiah 22:20-24) - Jesus, the "root and offspring of David" (Revelation 5:5; 22:16), has authority not just over the city of Jerusalem, but over all creation.</p>
<p>[8] I know your deeds.</p> <p>See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.</p> <p>I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.</p> <p>[9] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars-- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.</p> <p>[10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.</p>	<p>3. Their Strength</p> <p>A door of opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A door that could not be closed by their enemies. • It was opened, <i>not</i> because of their <i>strength</i>, but because of their <i>faithfulness</i> to Jesus and his Word. <p>Victory over their enemies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These enemies claimed to be the true followers of God (though they actually <i>weren't</i>). • These enemies would have to admit that Jesus loved the church. <p>Protection during "the hour of trial."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? Because of their faithfulness (willingness to patiently endure). • Trials will come to the whole world, but they (the church) would be protected. 	<p><u>Open Door</u> An expression of Jesus' love for them - a love that even their enemies would have to acknowledge. (See verse 9.)</p> <p><u>Synagogue</u> - a place of worship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the days of the apostles, the Christians would have met in synagogues or in houses. To them, the word "church" referred to the <i>people</i>, not to a building or an institution. • These false "believers" (who were Jewish) would have claimed that they themselves were "God's people," and they would have expelled (from the synagogue) those who were <i>truly</i> faithful to God. <p><u>Kept ... keep</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This word means: "to guard, pay attention to, watch over" • They "paid attention" to Jesus' word (v. 8) and his command (v. 10)... so Jesus will "pay attention" to them during their trials. • Perhaps a better translation: "I will keep you safe." The emphasis is on <i>protection</i>, not <i>escape</i>. (Even though escaping trials might sometimes be a part of the protection, it isn't always that way.)
	<p>4. Their Weakness - [None]</p>	<p>Though the world views them as weak, their trust in God is their strength.</p>

<p>[11] I am coming soon.</p> <p>Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown</p>	<p>5. Their Duty</p> <p>Remember the facts (implied)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus <i>is</i> coming soon! <p>Keep on being faithful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who do so will have a reward reserved for them. 	<p>Jesus is coming! Be prepared; be ready! This is a constant theme throughout the book of Revelation.</p> <p>"<u>Holding fast</u>" - an <i>ongoing</i> way of life. We cannot use our present strengths as an excuse for future laziness. We don't quit the "race" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8) until the "race" is over.</p>
<p>[12] Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.</p> <p>I will write on him 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 him my new name.</p> <p>[13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.</p>	<p>6. A Promise to All</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A permanent place in God's presence; they will never be forced to leave. • A permanent place (citizenship) in God's kingdom (city). • A special (new) relationship to Jesus - one that goes beyond what they already have. <p>These blessings are for <i>all</i> who are willing to take heed to what the Spirit says in this letter to Jesus' people in Philadelphia.</p>	<p><u>Temple (etc.)</u> - They will have a permanent part in the <i>eternal</i> temple of God, where false believers will <i>never</i> be able to expel them!</p> <p><u>Name</u> - It <i>represents</i> the person who is named.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will belong to God (with all the honor and privileges that belong to God's children). • They will be recognized as citizens of God's eternal city - with all the rights and privileges that belong to citizenship. • They will have a special relationship to Jesus and will belong to him. <p>These things are promised to <i>all</i> who are willing to remain faithful to Jesus and true to his Word.</p>

Additional Comments about Revelation 3:10

The word "trial" also means "test" or "temptation." Christians aren't told they will *never* have trials or periods of testing. Rather, they are promised the power and "open door" to get out of the trials (we would say "get *through* them") with Jesus' protection.

This verse is simply stating that God will guard and protect them. It doesn't say that they *won't* experience trials - otherwise they wouldn't have needed the patient endurance!

Historically, the church of Philadelphia *did* experience persecution. For some, it even meant death. But God gave them the strength they needed to come out of it victoriously.

- In John 17:15, Jesus prays that his followers would be "kept from" the evil one, yet he specifically states that he is *not* asking for them to be taken out of the world. His prayer is that the evil one will not gain the victory over them. (The phrase, "keep from" is identical to what is found in Revelation 3:10.)
- In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we are promised an "escape" or a "way out" from temptation. However, when we read the entire verse, we discover that this escape is *not* so that we *won't* have to experience temptations, but so that we will have the strength to "stand up" under them, or to "endure" them.

It is true that some trials aren't experienced by God's people, simply because they have chosen to follow God, rather than the world. On the other hand, there are times that their trials may be *greater*, because the world tends to hate the person who is loyal to Jesus (and who, therefore, hates what the world values).

As far as severe persecution is concerned, many Christians have suffered severe trials, down through the ages. The difference between the suffering at the "end times" and what Christians experience now *won't* be the painfulness of the suffering. It will be the worldwide extent of it.

Rev. 3:7-13 Supplementary Study Information

Some Background Comments about Philadelphia

Several times, this city was almost destroyed by earthquakes. Often, the buildings would be destroyed, and only the pillars would be left standing. This may be of significance, when Jesus describes the people of the church as "pillars" in God's temple - v. 12. Though they were weak and experienced many trials, they would never lose their place in God's presence.

Verse 7

HOLY AND TRUE

In everything, the Christians at Philadelphia attempted to be like Jesus. They based their *lives* (as well as their doctrine) on Jesus' Word.

- "*Holy*" indicates being "set apart" *from* what is evil and *to* what is good and pure.
- "*True*" focuses on being real or genuine. There is a permanency to it; it stands opposed to what is fake (though the fake may temporarily look genuine). This concept is often associated with *faithfulness* (examples: 3:14; 19:11).

KEY OF DAVID

An allusion to Isaiah 22:20-24, where Eliakim (the palace administrator) was given power and authority over Jerusalem, comparable to what King David originally had.

Verse 8

OPEN DOOR

This does *not* mean that trials will be absent. Persecution is often present when God opens "doors" for his people. (Compare to 1 Corinthians 16:9.) We are to remain faithful, holy and true, *regardless of* our circumstances.

- These Christians were probably experiencing trials at the time they received this letter. This is suggested by verse 9 (a reference to opponents of the truth) and verse 10 (a reference to patient endurance).

LITTLE STRENGTH

What makes them strong? *God's* strength!

- God's strength is best seen when we are weak. (See 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.)
- When we are willing to remain faithful to Jesus and true to his Word, our *little* strength, can be amplified by God's *great* strength.

Verse 9

SYNAGOGUE - a place of worship.

(To the early Christians, the word "church" referred to the *people*, not to a building or an institution.)

There have always been people in places of worship, who were merely "religious." They would *claim* to be God's people - though they did not trust God *alone* for their salvation and righteousness (and perhaps saw no need to do so). Such people often oppose those who have a *genuine* relationship with God (and who exhibit the changes that accompany genuine salvation). They even expel them from the "church" (the building or synagogue). [An example of this is found in 3 John 1:9-10.]

- These false "believers" would have considered themselves loved by God, and the others cursed. Since, in this case, they were Jews, they may have even tried to link themselves to the promises and authority given to David - promises which Jesus alone can claim (see verse 7).
- In reality, these false "believers" would one day admit that *they* were the "fakes" or imposters. They were not genuine followers of God, but served Satan, instead. (For some, this admission might not occur until the Day of Justice.)

Verse 10

KEPT / KEEP

- The emphasis here is on Jesus' protection, not on an "escape" from trials. Sometimes, we *do* escape trials that the people of the world have to endure. But even if we experience them, they will not have the same effect on us (Jesus' disciples), as they have on the people of the world. (We, his disciples, have been given promises that the world knows nothing about.)

Some believe that God will remove his people from the world, before the final judgments at the end of this age. Though this verse does not deny the possibility, it does not affirm it, either. It is simply stating that God will guard or protect them.

- When trials come ...
 - Those who are faithful to Jesus will experience protection and victory.
 - The others (those *not* faithful to Jesus) won't.
- At the Day of Justice, those who do not belong to God will experience a "testing" that God's people will never have to experience.

Since this letter was written to *all* who are willing to "hear what the Spirit says," it has application that goes beyond just the Christians at Philadelphia. It has applied to Christians down through the centuries. It applies to us living today, and will apply to the faithful who will be alive during the trials that may come in the future.

THOSE WHO LIVE ON THE EARTH

This may have a specific reference to the unsaved, as it does other places in the book of Revelation (such as in 6:10 and 13:8). If so, it would be implying a *contrast* with those who have made the "New Jerusalem" (v. 12; also Revelation 21) their home.

- Those who belong to God are *even now* citizens of a different kingdom. They are now "aliens" (1 Peter 2:11), temporarily living among the kingdoms of this sinful world!

Verse 11

Jesus is coming! Be prepared! This is a constant theme throughout the book of Revelation.

- Trials may come... but Jesus will also come. This makes all our patient endurance (v. 10) worthwhile.
- *All* who are willing to be faithful and patient can look forward to his coming - 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 6:12; Revelation 21:7; etc.
- "Holding fast" is an *ongoing* way of life. We cannot use our present strengths as an excuse for future laziness. We don't quit the "race" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8) until the "race" is over.

There are many similarities between these Christians and those at Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

- Both were insignificant, from the world's perspective, but great from God's perspective: 2:9 (poverty vs. rich); 3:8 (weak vs. strong in the Lord).
- Both experienced opposition from false "believers" - Jews who rejected Jesus: 2:9; 3:9 (implied by context).
- Both situations required patient endurance and faithfulness: 2:10 (they needed to patiently endure); 3:10 (they *were* patiently enduring).
- Both were promised crowns, if they would remain faithful and not deny Jesus: 2:10; 3:11.

Verse 12

TEMPLE (etc.)

These specific Christians (which would have included both Jews and non-Jews) may have been expelled from the local synagogue by the false "believers" (a group of Jews who rejected Jesus). Jesus reminds them that they will have a part in the *eternal* temple of God, where they will *never* be expelled! They will be as permanent as the pillars themselves!

- We, too, are guaranteed a permanent place in God's presence, if we are willing to do what he told them to do - verse 11.
- God's people are sometimes symbolically described as a building or temple (Ephesians 2:20-22). So it is quite fitting for Jesus to compare them to a "pillar" in the temple. [Note that this use of the word "temple" may be symbolic, representing God's presence, rather than a specific building, since Revelation 21:22 says that there will be no temple in the "New Jerusalem."]

NAME

The "name" represents the person who is named.

- The "overcomer" will belong to God. God himself will claim him as his own - a child of royalty. As such, he will have all the honor and privileges that belong to God's children.
- The "overcomer" will be recognized as a citizen of God's city - with all the rights that belong to that citizenship. (The city mentioned here is the *eternal* Jerusalem, which will exist on the *new* earth - Revelation 21 and elsewhere.)
- The "overcomer" will have a special relationship to Jesus and will belong to him.

Jesus himself will have a new name, perhaps representing the honor and glory he will have, as all heaven and earth bows down before him and acknowledges him for who he is.

"MY GOD"

Jesus interacts with us both as the Creator God and as the sinless man who took our place, to pay the penalty for our sins. Thus, he is able to be the mediator (the "go-between") between a holy, righteous God and a sinful humanity. This phrase "my God" is spoken from the perspective of Jesus as a man. It does *not* deny Jesus' nature as God - a fact frequently mentioned in the book of John, and elsewhere.

- Note that this phrase, "my God" is *definitely not* being used in the trivial, debased way that so many people use God's name, today.

Verse 13

These promises apply to *all* of Jesus' followers (all who have "ears to hear" - verse 13), not just to those who initially received this letter. They have an identity and a significance that the others (the fakes) will never have.