

The Church At Philadelphia

Rev. 3:7-13

City

1. Philadelphia was a city in Lydia in Asia Minor, and is mentioned 3 times in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 1:4, 11; 3:7).
2. It was built by king Attalus II Philadelphus, whose name it bore.
 - a. It dates back to about 150 years before Christ, and was the most recent of the seven cities mentioned by Jesus in these letters to the “seven churches.”.
 - b. He built the city out of affection for his brother and predecessor, Ecumenes II.
3. It was situated on the lower slopes of the Tmolus, about twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis and 100 miles West of Smyrna.
 - a. Philadelphia was located on the Cogamus River and was a tributary to the Hermus.
 - b. It was located on the main trade route from west to east, and was an important and wealthy trade center.
 - c. The city was known for its fine wines, and the area around the city that was great for growing grapes.
 - d. The city was filled with paganism, and had many temples and festivals to pagan deities.
4. The name Philadelphia means “brotherly love.”
 - a. The Greek is “philadelpheia” [fee lah **dehl** fay ah].
 - b. The word “Philadelphia” originally carried with it the idea of “brother loving” or “brother lover.”
5. It was a wine -producing region and the chief god worshiped there was Dionysus, the god of wine.
6. There is no direct mention of the church being persecuted either by the Jews or the Romans in this letter. The reference to “the synagogue of Satan” may imply persecution from this ungodly group.
7. It was a Roman city until A.D. 1379 when it fell into the hands of the Turks.
8. This city still exists by the name Alasehir, but has been several times almost destroyed by earthquakes.
9. It has a population of 15,000 to 20,000 people, but the population in the 1st century is not known.

Church

1. The New Testament reveals nothing about this fine church except what is found in this letter.
2. The Lord had not, however, overlooked this faithful congregation and had no words of condemnation for it.

3. He praised this church with “little power.”
4. The Lord did give them a warning, but He only had praise for this congregation that existed in the midst of a wicked, pagan city.

The Salutation

REV 3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

1. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write" - See Rev. 2:1 for discussion of “angel.”
2. “He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David” - Here is a three-fold description of Jesus.
 - a. He “is holy” and “true” just as His Father. (Rev. 6:10).

REV 6:10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, **O Lord, holy and true**, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

- 1) God is “holy” and so is His beloved Son. (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8; Jn. 6:69).

ISA 6:3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

REV 4:8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

JOH 6:69 "And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

- 2) Jesus was tempted while in the flesh. (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15).
- 3) Jesus was without sin. (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5).
- 4) Now in heaven and without flesh, like His Father, He cannot even be tempted. (Jas. 1:13).
- 5) Christ has never sinned.
- 6) Deity [God, Christ, Holy Spirit] are sinless.

- b. He “is true.” - Jesus describes Himself as “true” meaning “dependable, genuine, always faithful.”

- 1) In the gospel of John the word “true” is frequently used of Jesus. (Jn. 1:9; 6:32,55; 8:14, 16;15:1).
- 2) He was true to His Father always doing His will. (Jn. 5:30).
- 3) He was and is true to keep all the promises He has made to His followers.

- c. He “has the key of David.” - Jesus was the promised seed of David. - the Messiah to come. (Isa. 9:6, 7; Lk. 1:32,33).

- 1) The language denotes Jesus has authority to open and shut.

- 2) One who has the key to a house or palace has unlimited access to it.
- 3) Jesus has the key to the true house of David, the Messianic kingdom, and will admit those who come to Him in trusting obedience and will shut out those who do not obey Him. (Jn. 3:36; Heb. 5:9).
- 4) He also has the keys “of death and of Hades”

REV 1:18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

- a) He has the power and authority to raise men from the dead. (Jn. 11:25).
- b) He has the power to keep the wicked in Hades, and to cast them into hell. (Rev. 20:14).

REV 20:14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

3. “who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this” - Jesus has absolute control [authority] over the kingdom. (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18).
 - a. Jesus admits those who obey Him.
 - b. He shuts the door to those who refuse to do the will of His Father. (Matt. 7:21).
 - c. He can also shut the door of opportunity. (Acts 16:6, 7).

ACT 16:6 And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

ACT 16:7 and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

“I Know Your Deeds”

REV 3:8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

1. “I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut”
 - a. The Lord was fully aware of their “deeds” and those “deeds” were good.
 - 1) “Deeds” is plural from “ergon” [ehr gon] meaning “deed, work.”
 - 2) This was an active and sound church. It was strong morally, doctrinally, and in deeds.
 - 3) “Deeds” are not defined, but most likely include their efforts to spread the gospel.
 - b. The church there had “an open door.” Lit. “I have given before you a door having been opened.”
 - 1) This language is used in the New Testament to mean there was an opportunity for the spreading of the gospel. (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3).
 - 2) This seems to be the idea here.

- 3) The Lord has given us open doors that we must quickly enter in view of the fact these doors can be shut at any time.
2. “because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name”
- a. They had “a little power.” NASB, RSV, ASV

- Some translations render the words “a little strength.” KJV.NKJV, NIV.
- “Power” come from “dunamis” [**doo** nah mis] meaning “power, strength, might.”

- 1) This could refer to the **size of the congregation**. The church may have been small, and from a human point of looking at things had little power to change things. Proclamation of the gospel could change that. (Rom. 1:16).
- 2) They may have been a **poor congregation** as many New Testament churches were.
- 3) They may have fit the description of those called Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 1:26-30 who had few “wise” or “noble” or “mighty” in the estimation of the world.

1CO 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

1CO 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

1CO 1:28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are,

1CO 1:29 that no man should boast before God.

- 3) Most New Testament churches were poor and did not have many mighty and noble.
- 4) The church is still like this in most places in the world.
- 5) Regardless of their “little power” or “little strength” the Lord could immensely strengthen them. (2 Cor. 12:9; Isa. 40:29).

2CO 12:9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

ISA 40:29 He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power.

- 6) Being weak is an asset [not a liability] when joined to the Lord’s power, strength.
- 7) We should always recognize our “little power” or “little strength” is magnified by the Almighty God and His Son. (Rom. 8:31,32).
- b. They had “kept” His “word.” This is required to show love for Jesus and to be saved. (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:14; Lk. 6:46).
- c. They had not “denied” the “name” of Jesus, but continued to confess Him. See Mk. 8:38; Matt. 10:32,33.

“Synagogue of Satan”

REV 3:9 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

1. "Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan"
 - a. It is pathetic when those claiming to serve God were really "the synagogue of Satan."
 - b. Jews most often persecuted Christians rather than becoming Christians.
2. "who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie"
 - a. They claimed to be "Jews," but they lied.
 - b. The true Jew was one inwardly. (Rom. 2:28, 29).

ROM 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

ROM 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

- c. The true Jew would embrace and always obey the One sent by God. (Jn. 3:34; 4:34; 5:23, 24; 6:29, 38, 39, 44).
3. "behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet" - This is not explained, but certainly describes defeat on the part of the Jews. The church would grow spiritually and numerically with the blessing and help of the Lord.
4. "and to know that I have loved you" - Jesus had given His life for the church. (Eph. 5:25).
 - a. He is our Mediator and Advocate with the Father. (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:1,2).
 - b. He strengthens and disciplines those who follow Him. (Phil. 4:13; Heb. 12:5-11).

Promise 1

REV 3:10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.

1. "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance" - They had been very faithful to keep His word.
 - a. Jesus made this promise of those keeping His word. (Jn. 14:23,24).
 - b. Jesus also uttered these words in regard to keeping His word. (Jn. 14:15, 21; 15:10).
2. "I also will keep you from the hour of testing" - He will preserve them in the "the hour of testing" coming upon the whole world."
3. "that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth"
 - a. The language "those who dwell upon the earth" refers to unbelievers in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 11:10; 13:8-12, 14; 17:8).
 - b. Jesus does not define "the hour of testing" and we do not know what this warning exactly entailed.

- c. We can be confident that it was a warning of unpleasant things to come.
- d. Jesus warned His disciples that faithfulness would mean persecution. (Matt. 10:22; Lk. 21:16, 17).

MAT 10:22 "And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

LUK 21:16 "But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,

LUK 21:17 and you will be hated by all on account of My name.

- e. These words may have meant they would not be harmed spiritually. (Lk. 21:18,19; Matt. 10:28).

LUK 21:18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish.

LUK 21:19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.

REV 3:11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.

1. "I am coming quickly" - This is a coming of judgment - not the 2nd coming and judgment at the end of time.
 - a. The Lord knows how to tell time and it is obvious He is not referring to His coming at the end of time.
 - b. "The hour of testing" was fast approaching.
 - 1) "Hour" is not a literal 60 minutes. See 1 John 2:18.
 - 2) It means a time of testing would soon be upon them.
2. "hold fast what you have" - They are exhorted to continue their faithfulness.
 - a. Jesus does not have any criticism of this fine church.
 - b. This was also true of the church in Smyrna. (Rev. 2:8-11).
3. "in order that no one take your crown"
 - a. The language suggests it was possible to have their crown taken away if they did not "hold fast."
 - b. This was possible if they did not continue to faithfully live for Jesus. (1 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 3:12; 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 3:17,18).
 - c. It was urgent they follow the advise He gave the church at Smyrna. (Rev. 2:10).

Promise 2

REV 3:12 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon 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 My new name.

1. "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God"
 - a. "He who overcomes" - This is a promise to all who overcome - not a select few.

- b. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God" - This seems to be reference to the heavenly kingdom.
 - 1) Each one would be "a pillar" there.
 - 2) It denotes importance and permanence in the heavenly city.
- 2. "and he will not go out from it anymore" - Heaven would be their home forever. (Rev. 22:5).

Promise 3

- 3. "and I will write upon him the name of My God" - Jesus refers to His Father as "My God."
 - a. He did this during His ministry. (Matt. 27:46; Jn. 20:17).

MAT 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

JOH 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

- b. Jesus Himself is Deity. (Matt. 1:18-25; Jn. 1:1-3; 10:30; 14:9; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8).
- c. What is exactly meant by the words "and I will write upon him the name of My God" is not explained, but it denotes God's ownership and blessings.
- 4. "and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name"
 - a. The "city" of God is called "the new Jerusalem" in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 21:2).
 - b. Jesus here uses a prolepsis in using the words "the new Jerusalem" later discussed in this book.
 - c. Heaven has always existed, but this is the first time it is called "the new Jerusalem."
 - d. Paul called it the "Jerusalem above." (Gal. 4:26).

GAL 4:26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

- e. This beautiful and blissful city is described in Revelation 21 and 22.

REV 3:13 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

- 1. "He who has an ear" - Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6.
- 2. "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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