

## The Church with the Open Door

Revelation 3:7-13

*Studies in Revelation #11*

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I pray we are a Philadelphia church. You see, along with the church in Smyrna, Philadelphia is the only other church that doesn't receive any rebuke from Jesus. And what's interesting are the similarities between Smyrna and Philadelphia: first, they are small in strength, small in the eyes of the world, and most likely small in numbers; second, they are poor and hated churches; and third, they both have a mutual enemy whom Jesus calls "so-called Jews."

But there's one difference between these two: Smyrna had to spend all its spiritual strength enduring persecution while Philadelphia still had opportunity to go out and spread the gospel. And it's here that I pray we are a Philadelphia church. We, too, this morning have not been crushed by persecution but have the opportunity to propagate the gospel in our community. As we think about that notice the same outline to Philadelphia as we saw to Smyrna:

1. *Christ's Identification (v. 7)*
2. *Christ's Commendation (vv. 8-11)*
3. *Christ's Promise (vv. 12-13)*

### **Christ's Identification (v. 7)**

Jesus first identifies himself as "**the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens**" (v. 7). He is **the holy one, the true one**, which as we saw in 1:5 means that he is

the faithful witness. He proclaimed the true Word of the true God even in the face of opposition, persecution, and threat.

Jesus is also the one **who has the Key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens**. Remember in 1:18 that he said he had the keys of death and hades? The expression **the Key of David** comes from Isaiah 22:22. The prophet pronounced judgment upon Shebna, the king's treasurer and most important officer. This office would be taken away from Shebna and given to another. And it is in this connection that Isaiah uses the expression "the key of David." This power of the key, therefore, symbolized general supervision over the king's business, and included specifically the authority to determine who were allowed to enter into the king's presence and into his service. Christ possesses this key. Jesus has all authority and power as the King of the kingdom. He has the authority to open and shut the door of the Father's kingdom.

This means that because Jesus is Lord, evangelism is his work in the world through us. The Father is seeking worshippers, the Son was sent to seek and to save that which was lost, and the Holy Spirit blows like the wind wherever and whenever he desires. We need to have that confidence when we invite people to church. We need to have this boldness when we talk to our neighbors about Christ.

## **Christ's Commendation (vv. 8–11)**

Jesus then commends this church saying, **"I know your works,"** but then notice what he says, **"Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut"** (v. 8). What is the open door? We know from John's Gospel that Jesus is the door of salvation (John 10:7). But I believe what Jesus is saying is not that he opens a door for our salvation, but that he opens the opportunity for us to proclaim the gospel to the world. All throughout the New Testament in Acts (Acts 14:27) and Paul's letter's the image of an open door is used for evangelism. Paul speaks about staying in Ephesus because "a wide door for effective work has opened to me" (1 Cor. 16:9) and that when he went to Troas "a door was opened for me in the Lord" (2 Cor. 2:12). And Paul even asks the churches to pray for the apostles and their helpers "that God may open to us a door for the word" (Col. 4:3; cf. Eph. 6:19).

This commendation was so needed, because as we continue, we see him commend them despite their *outward condition*: **"I know that you have but little power"** (v. 8). This church was insignificant in the eyes of the community. They could not change anything according to the world's way of thinking. This church was small in numbers. This church was hardly known in the city. This church did not boast including the wealthy and influential in the city. This church had limited financial resources. According to the standard of the world, the church in Philadelphia had indeed but little strength. And this is not just true of them. The church of Jesus Christ is always of little power if compared with the strength of the

world. It is always comparatively small in numbers. It usually is financially poor. It does not count among its numbers the rich and the great of the world. What the Savior here writes about the church in Philadelphia may be said of all the churches.

This commendation was also so needed because of their *inward condition*: “**yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name**” (v. 8). This church was probably a small church, it was probably a tired church, and it was probably not seeing the outward fruits of its witness in the world. To the world this was a weak church, but in the eyes of the Lord it was strong indeed. They kept the Lord’s Word, being faithful to the truth of the gospel. And to do this requires significant spiritual strength. The negative form of the expression, **and have not denied my name**, implies that those who called themselves Jews exerted influence to make the Christians deny the name of Christ. This expression also implies, by way of contrast, that the church in Philadelphia had openly confessed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They could not and did not keep silent about that name of their glorious Lord and Redeemer, in whom they believed and whom they loved, who had delivered them from sin and death and merited for them everlasting life and glory.

They were faithful in keeping the Word of Christ in the face of opposition. As verse 9 says, “**Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.**” There

are so many in the world today who claim to be the true followers of God and even who claim to be the true Christians. But they are known by their fruits of persecuting the true church.

So Jesus says, **“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown”** (vv. 10–11).

### **Christ’s Promise (vv. 12–13)**

Finally, Jesus makes beautiful *promises* to this church and to us for both this life and the life to come at the end of his message in verse 12:

**The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.**

What promises! Christ promises to make us **pillar(s) in the temple of...God**. What does a pillar on a building communicate to you? Permanency. And you even see this in what Jesus goes on to say: **“Never shall he go out of it.”** Go back in your mind to the Old Testament. What was David’s one great desire above all? “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). That’s not only a desire, that’s a promise!

Christ also promises to write on us, sort of a spiritual tattoo. And what will his writing say? He will write three names on us: **the name of my God...the name of the city of my God...and my own new name.** In the Scriptures, the name of someone or something corresponds to reality. So we read that God's name is God himself.

And so Jesus promises us that God's name will be written on us, meaning, that we will be so joined to and united with our God in eternal fellowship that it will be like a name written on us. How close will our communion be? As close as writing on our skin. This is a way of describing the closeness of fellowship, like Moses speaking to God face to face as a friend.

Jesus also promises to write on us the name of New Jerusalem. What we'll see later in chapter 21 is that the city new Jerusalem is the church, the people of God. So Jesus is promising us that we are members of the elect.

And finally, Jesus promises his own new name. The name that is above every name, as Paul calls it in Philippians 2, is not Jesus, but Lord. And so this is a way of saying that we belong to Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

## **Conclusion**

I pray we are a Philadelphia church. A Philadelphia church is a missionary church. It is a church that preserves and propagates the Word of God. It is a church that despite being weak world speaking it is strong spiritually speaking. It

is a church that walks through the open door into the world, which Christ himself opens. It is a church that goes forth conquering by the promise and power of Christ himself, who is the true Evangelist through our weak words. A Philadelphia church is a church that knows it's Savior now and that will be known by him in eternity, and because of that gospel blessing, wants to make him known to the world. Is the OURC a Philadelphia church? Do you want to be such a church? Amen.