

Revelation 3:7-13    “Philadelphia: Hold Fast”  
Isaiah 22  
Psalm 23

June 9, 2019

The story of Shebna and Eliakim is a curious story!  
Shebna was the steward of King Hezekiah.  
But he seems to have become proud –  
and he failed to trust in the LORD.

The LORD singles out Shebna as an illustration of the rebellion and pride of Israel,  
and he sent the prophet Isaiah to proclaim the fall of Shebna.

“I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station.  
In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,  
and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him,  
and will commit your authority to his hand...”

All that is a pretty ordinary description of the transfer of office.

But then comes the interesting statement:

“And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David.  
He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”  
(Language taken over in the book of Revelation!)

It all sounds like a great and glorious honor for Eliakim!

He will become a peg upon which all the honor of his father’s house will hang!

But then the peg will give way, and it will be cut down and fall...

Shebna was a failure – a proud man who did not trust the LORD.  
Eliakim was a success – a faithful man who trusted the LORD!

What peg are you hanging your hopes on?

If your hope is hanging on another person,  
that person had better be named *Jesus!*

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 23C –

The LORD is my Shepherd –  
he is the one I trust – the one I hang my hopes on!

Sing Psalm 23

Read Revelation 3:7-13

## 1. Who Is Jesus? The Holy One, The True One, the One Who Has the Key of David (v7)

<sup>7</sup> “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of 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.*”

Each of the letters starts with the question: who is Jesus?

Jesus is the holy one –  
a phrase used often in the OT to refer to the LORD himself.

And he is the true one:

This connects back to the portrayal of Jesus in 1:5 as the “faithful witness”  
(the “true witness”).

It also prefigures the “falseness” of those who say that they are Jews, but are not.

And Jesus is also the one who has the key of David –  
who opens and no one will shut – who shuts and no one opens.

When you hear about keys, you may also think of chapter 1 as well –  
but in Rev. 1:18, Jesus had said, “I have the keys of Death and Hades” –  
whereas here he says “who has the key of *David*.”

Jesus quotes from Isaiah 22 as a way of identifying himself  
as the one who holds the future of the house of David in his hand.

When Jesus opens the door – no one can shut it.

When Jesus shuts the door – no one can open it.

And Jesus encourages the angel of the church in Philadelphia – I know your works –  
a line that Jesus uses with five of the seven churches! –  
sometimes for good – sometimes for bad!

But in this case, it is good!

## **2. What Does Jesus Know? (v8)**

### **a. Your Works – and the Open Door (v8a)**

<sup>8</sup> “*I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.*”

After all of the warnings against so many of the churches,  
it is good to hear of a church that is doing well!

And Jesus promises that he has set before them an open door – which no one can shut.

Have no fear!

The door is wide open!

What door?

The door to the house of David!  
The door to the heavenly temple – the heavenly city.  
The door of salvation!

And Jesus knows something more about the church of Philadelphia:

**b. Your Little Power – Yet You Have Kept My Word (v8b)**

*I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

The words “I know” only occur once in the verse (at the beginning) –  
so the sentence reads,

“I know your works...that you have but little power...”

In other words, I know that in spite of your feebleness,  
you have been faithful!

This is a church without social standing –  
without “power” in the community –  
and yet they have kept Jesus’ word –  
and they have not denied his name!

In the Great Commission, Jesus told his disciples

“Go, therefore, into all the world, and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,  
and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

And the church in Philadelphia was doing it!

In spite of their weakness – in spite of their “but little power” –  
because faithfulness to Jesus does not require *power* –  
obedience to the Great Commission does not require anything fancy!

It just means “you have kept my word, and you have not denied my name.”

Have you been tempted to deny Jesus’ name?

Denying Jesus’ name is not just something you do verbally.  
When you are tempted to *act* as though you are not a Christian –  
that is at the heart of what Jesus is saying.

It’s not enough to say “I’m a Christian” –  
you also have to *act* and *speak* as a Christian in all your daily interactions.

In verse 9, we turn to what Jesus will do.

### 3. What Will Jesus Do? (v9-11)

#### a. The Synagogue of Satan Will Learn that I Have Loved You (v9)

<sup>9</sup> 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.

Jesus again speaks of the “synagogue of Satan.”

The assembly of the Accuser.

Jesus is speaking about the Jewish synagogue.

In many cities in the Roman world,

the Jewish synagogues had kicked the Christians out.

And then they went to the Roman authorities

and accused the Christians of not really being Jewish.

This was a big deal because Judaism was a legal religion in the Roman empire.

What that meant

was that Jews did not have to participate in sacrificing to the emperor.

So long as Christians were considered a form of Judaism,

they would be exempted from the worship of the emperor.

But if the Christians were *not* considered Jewish,

they would have to sacrifice to the emperor.

So when the Jews appeared before the magistrate to accuse the Christians of not being Jews, the Jews were acting like Satan (the accuser).

And throughout church history, we have sadly seen too many times

when Christians try to bring harm on other Christians –

because of intramural differences.

I think of how Mary Tudor (sometimes known as “bloody Mary”)

executed dozens of faithful Christians – just for being Protestant.

Hence, Jesus calls them “the synagogue of Satan.”

And Jesus says that those of the synagogue of Satan *say that they are Jews and are not, but lie...*

If you say that you are a Jew,

but you do not believe in Jesus as Messiah,

then you lie – you are not really a Jew.

That may sound harsh –

but think of it this way:

If someone says “I am a Muslim” –

but they neither believe that Allah is God – nor that Mohammad is his prophet –  
then they are not really a Muslim!  
If someone says “I am a vegetarian” –  
but they eat beef every day –  
then they are not really a vegetarian!

In the same way, if someone says that they worship the God of the OT,  
but they do not acknowledge Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT,  
then they are not really Jews.

Now, you shouldn't go around telling Jews – “you're not really a Jew” –  
because this text is not written to *Jews* – it's written to the church.  
The point here is to encourage those who are undergoing persecution  
that those who are accusing you  
have failed to act like the name that they bear.

So, for instance, if you go around accusing Jews of not really being Jews,  
then you have failed to act like the name that *you* bear –  
because the whole *point* of this passage is the *conversion* of the Jews at the end of v9:

*behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.*

This is the sort of language that Isaiah and others of the prophets used  
to speak of how the Gentiles would come to faith in the God of Israel!  
Now Jesus says that the ingrafting of the Gentiles is also for the sake of the conversation of Israel  
(like what Paul says in Romans 11).

Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile,  
the thing that matters is,  
*do you believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and savior of sinners?!*

If you *do* – then it doesn't matter whether you are a Jew or a Gentile – you're in!  
And if you *don't* – then it doesn't matter whether you are a Jew or a Gentile – you're out!

So the first thing that Jesus does is make the Synagogue of Satan *know* that Jesus loves his people!

The second thing is:

**b. I Will Keep You from the Hour of Trial (v10)**

<sup>10</sup> *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.*

Jesus promises that those who patiently endure, he will keep from the coming hour of trial.

I know that many of you have endured some pretty serious trials.

It is always a bad idea to say what I am about to say.

This is a *lousy* counseling strategy!

Never do this when trying to encourage someone through a tough time!!

But the point of what Jesus is saying is:

“Do you think what you have been through is tough?

Well, it’s *nothing* compared to what is coming down the pike!!”

As we’ll see at various points throughout the book of Revelation,  
the “hour of trial” is going to be awful!

But those who have kept Jesus’ word about patient endurance  
will be kept from the hour of trial!

How will you be kept from the hour of trial?

Jesus will protect you.

If you endure patiently the trials that come your way because of your faith in Jesus Christ,  
then you need not fear the trials that will come upon those who dwell on earth.

“Those who dwell on earth” is a term that will be used often in Revelation (6:10, 8:13, 11:10, etc.)  
and it always refers to unbelievers who suffer under God’s judgment.

There is no hint here of anything like a “rapture” –

the Bible never teaches that Christians will “disappear” for a while.

Rather, Jesus promises that he will *protect us* during trials and tribulations.

And Jesus does this by *coming*, as he says in verse 11:

**c. I Am Coming Soon – so Hold Fast (v11)**

<sup>11</sup> *I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.*

Isaiah 22 spoke of how God would take away Shebna’s crown and give it to Eliakim.

God did this because Shebna became proud and arrogant.

Don’t be proud and arrogant!

Remember that Jesus is coming soon.

So hold fast what you have.

Hold fast to Jesus.

Hold fast to his Word.

Hold fast to his *promises*.

Hold fast to all that Jesus commanded!

“...so that no one may seize your crown.”

If you let go – if you give up – if you walk away from Jesus –  
then your crown is gone!

But if you hold on – if you hold fast – if you continue steadfast  
holding on to Jesus – holding fast to Jesus! –  
then no one will seize your crown!

And finally,

Jesus speaks to the one who conquers:

#### **4. The One Who Conquers (v12-13)**

##### **a. A Pillar in the Temple (v12a)**

*<sup>12</sup> The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it,*

The one who conquers – the one who is victorious –  
who makes it to the finish line! –

I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.

The point of this is made abundantly clear by the next line:

“Never shall he go out of it.”

Christ has opened the door to the heavenly temple –  
and now, the one who conquers will never leave the temple again!

(At the end of the book of Revelation,  
there are those who are “outside” of the temple –  
outside of the holy city –  
those who are facing eternal judgment and condemnation.)

We are permanent residents of the heavenly temple!

How permanent is shown in the second half of verse 12,  
as Jesus places the name of God upon us!

##### **b. The Name of My God, and of the New Jerusalem, and of My Own New Name (v12b)**

*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.*

To have someone’s name placed upon you

was to be clearly and definitely marked as belonging to this person or group.

Think of how tattoos often function.

When you join a gang, you will get the gang tattoo –  
because you are marked as one who belongs to the gang.

Jesus gives a tattoo to all those who belong to him!

He writes on us the name of his God – the name of the city of God (new Jerusalem),  
and Jesus own new name.

We heard about the new name in 2:17 with the church in Pergamum.

In our baptism we are *marked* with the mark of Jesus.

We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus puts his own name upon us –  
and we become members of the visible church.

We don't pretend to know when a person becomes a member of the invisible church –  
because that (my definition) is *not visible*.

But to those who patiently endure –  
to those who remain steadfast – holding fast to Jesus –  
Jesus promises that he will write *his name* upon our hearts forever!

**c. Hear the Spirit (v13)**

<sup>13</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*