

REVELATION 3:7-13

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Over the last several weeks we have been digging into these letters that Jesus wrote to seven churches located in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

And the reason that we are taking our time is that these letters were not just written to these seven churches, but the Holy Spirit has given them to us as well so that we can learn from them, correct our own lives and grow in our relationship with the Lord.

You see, at the end of each letter Jesus says, **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** Revelation 2:29. May we be open to what God is saying to us as we read through His Word and these letters!

So these letters were written to actual churches that were in existence in John’s day and, like I have said they were written to each of us as well.

But there is another important aspect to these letters, and we see this being played out, historically speaking.

You see, these letters have a prophetic component to them as they give us a picture of church history from the apostolic church all the way to the last days church.

And I will deal with that in a minute.

As we have done with the previous letters we have studied, we will be looking at the seven key principles of this letter: the *destination*, the *title* or *description of Jesus*, the *commendation* except for Laodicea, the *rebuke* except for Smyrna and Philadelphia, the *exhortation*, the *warning* except for Smyrna and Philadelphia, and the *promise* that Jesus gives to all who will listen and obey these words that the Spirit is speaking to them!

Now, prophetically speaking, look at what we have seen so far. Again, this is a review, but it is important for us to understand because these things continue to unfold in our day.

We have seen the church of Ephesus as the church that left its first love. We call this church – ***THE LOVELESS CHURCH!*** And their light or their witness of Christ was removed because they refused the warning of Jesus to remember, repent and repeat; to fall in love with Jesus. This represented the apostolic church or the church of the first century that lasted to around 63 A. D.

Then came the church of Smyrna or – ***THE PERSECUTED CHURCH!*** They faced intense persecution and yet they remained faithful to their Lord in the midst of this intense persecution and poverty. And as they were crushed by this persecution the fragrance of Jesus was released in their lives touching the lives of others. The persecuted church represented the church from around 63 A. D. to 312 A. D. where some 5 to 6 million Christians were put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ by Rome!

We also looked at the church of Pergamos or – ***THE COMPROMISING CHURCH!*** This church wanted to be liked, they did not want to rock the boat, they did not want to face any persecution or trouble and they compromised what they believed in. This church represented the church from around 312 A. D. to the 5th century where the church married the state and in doing so, they compromised what they believed!

We then looked at the church of Thyatira or – ***THE CORRUPT CHURCH!*** The corrupt church or the church of Thyatira lasted almost 1,000 years, from around 590 A. D. to 1517 A. D. And we know this period of time as the ***Dark Ages***. And as we have seen, the church of Thyatira represents the Roman Catholic Church, prophetically speaking. And for the first time Jesus says that if they don't repent, they will be cast into the Great Tribulation! (Revelation 2:22)

In our last study we looked at the fifth letter that Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and that was the church of Sardis. We might call this - ***THE DEAD CHURCH!*** Interestingly enough, we see the move from the dark ages into a period of time known as the Renaissance, which literally means "***rebirth.***" It is the name given to the great awakening of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating with the sixteenth century reformation in Europe! The Reformation movement was badly needed to confront the corruption within the Roman Catholic Church, but what began with life ended in death. It became nothing more than a monument to the past and when you look at the Protestant church today, that is exactly what has happened!

This evening we are going to look at the sixth letter that Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and this church is the church of Philadelphia – ***THE FAITHFUL CHURCH!***

Let's face it, everyone wants to be the church of Philadelphia and I am sure most churches do as well! Although someone posted an article on Facebook where the person writing the article said that they were the church of Laodicea or lukewarm and we all need to warm up some, that was his point, I think.

The problem with that is it is horrible because if you look at the church of Laodicea, and we will next time, Jesus is not even in the church, He is outside knocking for them to open the door and let Him in! They are the unsaved church! So not a good picture and if you don't get that, then it is hard for me to see anything good in the article or to even recommend it!

But again, Philadelphia is the church we all want to be. I am sure you have heard that saying, that ***“There is no perfect church out there, but if you do happen to find one, please don't join it, you will just ruin it!”***

We laugh at that, but it is true. There is no perfect church out there, but we do our best as we love the Lord and that was true of this church in Philadelphia. It was a good church. It was a faithful church. It was a sincere church. But it was not a perfect church because there are none.

Do you ever wonder why there is not a perfect church, not even here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc? I know, hard to believe, but it is true, we are not perfect, not even close.

But what is the reason. Because of the imperfect people that make up the church. The church is not a building, but people and we still have to deal with that flesh nature as Christians and it can rise up and cause us all kinds of problems and thus, there is no perfect church because there are no perfect people!

I like what John Phillips wrote regarding the church of Philadelphia. He wrote,

The church at Philadelphia was weak, but it was wonderful. There is not the slightest hint of rebuke from the Lord; nothing but praise is given.

It was a revival church.

It had experienced an evangelical revival; it had a world vision.

It had experienced an ecclesiastical revival; the disruptive, deadening influence of those who would have snared the church with Judaistic ritualism and legalism had been overcome.

It had experienced an eschatological revival; the truth of the Lord's imminent return was its beacon light.

Thus, the Lord stands before this church to offer not blame, but blessing; not the threat of a fearful vengeance, but the thrill of a fresh vision.

- John Phillips

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Revelation chapter 3, beginning in verse 7 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word, and we look at this letter that He wrote to the church in Philadelphia.

REVELATION 3

VERSE 7

We see that the *destination* of this letter is Philadelphia, and, as with the other letters that Jesus wrote, He once again is writing to the pastor of this church who would then share these words of God with the people that God has entrusted to him.

Now, let's take a few minutes and look at this city because it will help us to understand this letter that Jesus wrote to them.

The city of Philadelphia was located about 25 miles southeast of Sardis.

It sat upon an 800-foot hill overlooking an important road that lead from Europe to the east! The main purpose for this city was to make it a center from which the Greek culture, language and manners could spread throughout the Roman Province of Asia Minor.

Barclay makes this point as he says, *“Philadelphia had been built with the deliberate intention that it might become a missionary city. Beyond Philadelphia lay the wilds of Phrygia and the Barbarous tribes; and it was intended that the function of Philadelphia should be to spread the Greek language, the Greek way of life, the Greek civilization, throughout the regions beyond.”*

Because of that, this was a very prosperous city as Barclay again tells us, *“Philadelphia commanded one of the greatest highways in the world, the highway which led from Europe to the East. Philadelphia was the gateway from one continent to another.”*

Philadelphia was also known for the many gods they worshiped and the many temples they had to these gods.

One of the gods they worshiped was Dionysos, who was the god of wine and revelry, which makes sense. You see, this city was known for its great agricultural production with grapes topping the list and out of those grapes they made wine!

Also, because of all these temples, this city was known as *“Little Athens.”* Barclay makes this observation on this point, *“Philadelphia had so many gods and so many temples that sometimes men called it ‘Little Athens.’ To walk through its temple-scattered streets was to be reminded of Athens, the center of worship of the Olympian gods.”*

Philadelphia was also known for its frequent earthquakes. Because of these earthquakes they city had to be evacuated on several occasions.

Back in 17 A. D. an earthquake destroyed the city. Then, with the help of Tiberius, the city was rebuilt. Thus, as you can see, the ground was very unstable and that is going to relate to our study this evening, as you will see.

The name **“Philadelphia”** means *“brotherly love.”*

How did it get a name like that?

In 189 B. C. the city was founded by a man named Eumanes II. When he died his younger brother, Attalus II took over. And he loved his older brother so much that he named buildings after him. He even minted coins bearing his brother's image. And he talked about his brother constantly.

Because of that the people began to call the town Phileo-adelphos or Philadelphia, "*the city of brother love!*"

That is what should be seen in our lives as Christians.

John hits this point hard in I John 2:9-11 as he tells us, "**He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**"

Where did John get this?

Obviously, the Holy Spirit inspired him to write these words, but I also believe that he learned this from his Lord, that Jesus taught him this lesson. We see this in John 13:34-35 as Jesus tells us, "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

Folks, if you can't get along with the brethren, well, that is not really true. It is not that you can't, it is that you won't, it is a matter of the heart, and you are in rebellion against God! So if you can't love the brethren, how can you love the unsaved? Good question!

Ironside, in speaking of this church and their love, said, *“This implies that those contemplated here, love as brethren. They are born of God, and His love is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto them, and they are characterized by love to all who are Christ’s.”*

That is truly the character that should be seen in us as Christians, this unconditional love, this *AGAPE* love that is from God and distinguishes us as Christians!

How did the Gospel come to this city?

The Gospel probably came during Paul’s missionary stay in Ephesus where we are told in Acts 19:10, **“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”**

This is the church of Philadelphia, *historically* speaking, it was a real church that existed back in John’s day.

Today this city is a Turkish town called Ala-shehir and there is still a Christian church there, their light and their love has not gone out!

Prophetically speaking, where does the church of Philadelphia fit into church history or the church age?

We have seen so far, the church of Ephesus, who left their first love, Jesus Christ. This church represented the apostolic church or the church to around 63 A. D.

Then we came to the church of Smyrna that represented the persecuted church from around 63 A. D to 312 A. D., where some 5 to 6 million Christians were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ by Rome.

From there we moved to the church of Pergamos or the church of compromise as the church united with the state and what persecution could not do, this compromise weakened the church! This covered a period of time from around 312 A. D. to 590 A. D.

Now, from the church of Thyatira on, these churches are in existence today and for some, if they don't repent, they will be cast into the Tribulation Period.

The church of Thyatira represented the corrupt church that denied the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. This church represented the Roman Catholic Church and covered a period of time from around 590 A. D. to 1517 A. D., almost 1,000 years of corruption and it was a period of time known as the dark ages!

Out of the dark ages came a period of time called the Renaissance, which means "*rebirth*." It was a time of the great awakening as the Protestant Reformation moved away from the corruption of the Roman Catholic church and got back to the truths of God found in the Word of God. The time frame here is from 1517 A. D. to 1750 A. D. and as time went on, this church became lifeless, cold, and dead! They were no longer being led by the Spirit of God but by tradition, orthodoxy. Yes, they had a name but there was no life in them without the Spirit of God in them!

Now, out of this Protestant Reformation there are two main branches or end-time churches, and Philadelphia is one of them.

You see, out of this dead church there were people who loved the Lord and His Word. People who were guided by the Spirit of God and it led to the spiritual awakening of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that began over northern Europe and the British Isles and overflowed to America.

There were men like D. L. Moody in America; C. H. Spurgeon in London; William Carey doing missionary work in India; Hudson Taylor doing missionary work in China; and there was Wesley, Finney, Edwards and others as God put aside the old wineskins of dead orthodoxy and was using the new wineskins to work through.

That is the church *prophetically* speaking covering a period of time from the 1700's to the late 1800's.

In fact, William Carey goes down in history as the father of the modern missionary movement. The church that was dead awoke and missionary work began!

One Church historian writes: *“Two books sat in the London shop of a young cobbler: a well-worn Bible and Captain Cook’s journal. As the days went by, the cobbler found himself losing interest in working on the soles of shoes and caring more about the souls of people in far regions. So deep was the passion that stirred within him that on May 31, 1793, he walked into the little Protestant church he attended and said, ‘Could I please share?’ Allowed to speak a word, he read Isaiah 54:2-3. ‘We must lengthen the cords; we must strengthen the stakes,’ he preached passionately. ‘We must include others who have never heard. I want to go. Send me to India.’ His request stunned his congregation. After all, it had been one thousand years since anyone had launched a foreign missionary endeavor. But their surprise didn’t stop Carey’s congregation from sending him to India. In his first ten years, he became fluent in twelve languages. One of his works, the Bible he translated in Sanskrit, is still used to this day.”*

Also, from the Sardis period of church history came another church branch, the church of Laodicea. Philadelphia can be called the church of the open door and the church of Laodicea can be called the church of the closed door. Closed to the things of God and so much so that Jesus is outside that church knocking to get in! As you can see, there is the evangelical church and the liberal church!

And that plays into what we see next, the *title* or the *description of Jesus* that He uses here does not completely come out of Revelation chapter 1 as the others did. It comes out of Isaiah 22.

Now, in saying that, it does portray our Lord beautifully. You see, Jesus said that He is the one **“who is holy, He who is true.”**

I believe that His holiness identifies Him with His deity for God alone is holy.

In John 6:69, from The Amplified Bible, Peter said, **“And we have learned to believe and trust, and [more] we have come to know [surely] that You are the Holy One of God, the Christ (the Anointed One), the Son of the living God.”**

You see, His holiness speaks of His complete separation from evil, from sin. Thus, as believers, Peter admonishes us by saying, **“but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”** I Peter 1:15-16.

This church in Philadelphia, not being perfect but strived to live their lives separated unto God and God acknowledged their faithfulness and obedience to Him!

Jesus also says that He is **“true”** or ALETHINOS, (al-ay-thee-nos’) in the Greek and it speaks of being genuine or that He is the real thing.

In the midst of falsehood, in the midst of perversion and error, Jesus is truth and this church in Philadelphia was also the real thing because their faith was in Jesus who said, “**... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” John 14:6.

Here in Revelation 3:7 Jesus also describes Himself as “**He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.**”

What does that mean?

The Roman Catholic Church believes that Peter, their first Pope and his successors, have the authority to open the door of salvation, because they have the key. To those who are in good standing with the Roman Catholic Church, not God, the door is open. But they can shut the door to salvation and excommunicate those who commit mortal sins, and their only hope is to receive the Sacrament of Penance! For the strict Catholic, they believe that there is no salvation apart from the Roman Catholic Church!

But that is not what Jesus is saying and that is not what the Bible teaches. Then what does this mean?

First of all, I believe it is an Old Testament illustration that comes out of Isaiah 22:20-25 where we are told, “**Then it shall be in that day, That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; I will clothe him with your robe And strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem And to the house of Judah. The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father’s house. ‘They will hang on him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and**

the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the LORD has spoken.'"

You see, Eliakim was the steward over King Hezekiah's household. In other words, he was able to open and shut the doors that lead into the treasures of the King.

Here we see that Jesus Christ, whom Eliakim was a type of, is the faithful steward of the Kingdom.

You see, we have access to the Father through Jesus. We have access to heaven through Jesus and apart from Jesus the doors of heaven are closed.

It is as Jesus said in Revelation 1:18, "**. . . I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**"

You see, the holy and true God opens the doors both to the Kingdom of God and to Hades. The One who judges the spiritual life of the church also examines our own hearts!

Not only that, but I also believe the picture here is of doors of ministry that Jesus opens for us and some that He closes for us because He doesn't want us to go in that direction.

In Acts 16:6-10 we see a picture of this as we are told; "**Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'** Now after he had seen the vision, **immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.**"

God still opens and closes doors of ministry for us, and we will see that again as we move into the next verse.

One last point about those verses we read in Isaiah before we move on.

That peg that was cut down is the Lord and that burden that hung upon Him was our sin as He hung on the cross of Calvary for us!

It is as Paul said in Colossians 2:13-14, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”**

That is our Lord!

VERSE 8

Once again we see Jesus actively involved with His church, He knows what they are doing and that can be good or bad, depending on what they are doing, or they are not doing. But this is praise from Jesus for this church and what they were doing!

Jesus speaks of this open door, which I believe relates to their ministry because He says prior to this, **“I know your works.”**

A door of opportunity was opened for them by the Lord, a door of ministry for them to walk through.

Paul, in I Corinthians 16:9 said this to the Corinthian church regarding the ministry in Ephesus, **“For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”**

In Acts 14:27 Paul shares what the Lord was doing on their first missionary journey, **“Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”**

And in II Corinthians 2:12 Paul tells us, **“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord.”**

And notice that Jesus says they **“have a little strength.”** That was not a rebuke but reality. The work they were doing was not in their own strength, but in the strength of the Lord.

Paul, in Philippians 4:13 tells us, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** They not only believed it, but also lived it!

You see, God is still working, and He has placed an open door for each of us, which no one can shut, but we must step through it, step out in faith and walk!

God not only provides the opportunities for us folks, but He equips us for the work He has called us to do. And remember, it is not because of how great you are or how talented you are, but how gracious and merciful He is towards you!

And when you look at the world and then look at the church, we have far less power, strength, influence, and whatever else you want to put in there. We have a little strength and yet, we have the Lord and that is all that we need to accomplish what He wants us to do!

Not only that, but as you listen to some today, they think that the church is going to take over the world, especially when Donald Trump became President and many still believe that this is what the church will do.

That is not going to happen, in fact the world is going to move farther and farther from God, and we can clearly see that happening today.

One pastor compares this last day's church with the teaching from many pulpits today. This is what he wrote, "There are those who teach that in the last days there will be a major manifestation of the sons of God; that miracles will happen, wherein every sick person is healed, and glorious things will occur. But I believe that's hype and hyperbole. Yes, there are some good things happening. But it's the time of little strength. Jesus does not say this condemningly. He merely says that's the way it is during the age of Philadelphia. Thus, it's not an indictment, but rather an honest assessment of the 'last days' church."

It would seem, according to what the Bible tells us, that apostasy and not world-wide revival is the Biblical prediction for the last day's church.

But let's focus back on these doors of opportunity that God has opened for us, because they are still happening, even in these dark days.

But how often do we miss these doors of opportunity or negate them because we don't think they are very important!

Let me give you one example of a man who was saved and came to Spurgeon one day and asked him how he could win others to Jesus.

Well, Spurgeon asked the man, "*What are you? What do you do?*"

The man said, "*I'm an engine driver on a train.*"

Then Spurgeon asked him, "*Is the man who shovels coal on your train a Christian?*"

The man replied back, "*I don't know.*"

"*Go back,*" said Spurgeon, "*and find out and start on him.*"

You see, look and then walk but you need to look at what God has before you, don't miss out.

That is what the church in Philadelphia was doing, they saw the open door and they walked through it knowing the Lord would bring forth the fruit.

And think about this for a minute. This city was to spread the Greek culture, the Greek language to the whole region, but now it is going to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole region because the door Jesus opened and their obedience to walk by faith through that door.

How about you, are you willing to walk, not in your own strength or with your own ability, but in the strength of the Lord as He opens those doors of ministry for you? I hope so!

Peter tells us in I Peter 4:10-11, **“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

Start walking and using the gifts that God has given to you and through it all, give the Lord the glory that is due His name for He not only opened the door, but He equipped us to do the work!

The *commendation* to this faithful church by Jesus is two-fold.

First of all, they have kept God’s Word, they did not deny it or negate it or even water it down!

Folks, that is a big deal because it is proof of your love for Jesus, if you love His Word.

Do you doubt that? Maybe you don’t think that is important, and there are many in the church today, including pastors who feel that way.

If you struggle with this, then listen to what Jesus said in John 14:21, **“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”**

You see, it is not only reading God’s Word, but applying it to your life, it shows that you love Him!

Like I have said, in many churches today God’s Word is not even taught or if it is they tend to make it all fluff or water it down or misrepresent it, but not here in Philadelphia!

And listen to this insight that Henry Morris gives to us in his commentary on the book of Revelation. He wrote, *“When a church begins to deal loosely with the Word of Christ, it will sooner or later deny the name of Christ. . . . the name ‘Jesus’ means ‘salvation,’ and one who honors this name accepts the great salvation provided by His substitutionary atonement and justifying resurrection. One who honors the name ‘Christ’ . . . acknowledges His Person - His threefold eminence as Gods’ anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. One who honors him as ‘Lord’ believes and obeys his Word.”*

How true that is, and we are seeing the ramifications of moving away from the truths of God found in the Word of God today! And we will see that the church of Laodicea is alive and well today and it is growing, I am sad to say!

Secondly, they were devoted to the Lord, they did not deny His name. They were pressured to, but their love for the Lord caused them to live for the Lord.

Today we see people, churches, deny the name of Jesus, who He is and that is tragic.

Katharine Jefferts Schori who was the head of the Episcopal Church said the following and this is from The Herald Times Reporter, September 4, 2006.

We are told: *“Jefferots Schori personally believes in a relationship with God through Jesus, but does not see it as the only true path. ‘If we insist we know the one way to God, we’re putting God in a very small box,’ Jefferts Schori said. . . . In a sermon at the general convention she said, ‘Our mother Jesus gives birth to a new creation – and you and I are His children.’”*

How sad that is, and she was leading a church, a denomination to Hell!

And here we are in 2021 and we see apostasy growing in the church and the church has lost the ability to discern between what is of God and what is not of God. The church has become a social institution instead of a missionary minded group of people. We have negated the Gospel, we have negated the blood atonement, we have negated the virgin birth and watch out because as you go down that path, Jesus will end up outside your church knocking to get in – ***THE***

CHURCH OF LAODICEA!

The church in Philadelphia, like all the faithful churches that are in existence today, love the Word of God and they uphold the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We truly are seeing the true church separate from the false church, like oil separating from water.

In fact, as you look at the final two church letters, Philadelphia and Laodicea, they represent two streams of practice that came out of the Protestant Reformation, as I have said.

One was sweet and had a great love for the Word of God and a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus, the church of Philadelphia.

And the other was bitter and moved away from the Word of God, moved to experience instead. They turned cold and into intellectualism, leaving no room for Jesus, the church of Laodicea.

I like the insight that Barnhouse gives to us regarding the church of Philadelphia. He wrote, *“The church of Philadelphia is commended for keeping the Word of the Lord and not denying His Name. Success in Christian work is not to be measured by any other standard of achievement. It is not rise in ecclesiastical position. It is not the number of new buildings which have been built through a man’s ministry. It is not the crowds that flock to listen to any human voice. All of these things are frequently used as yardsticks of success, but they are earthly and not heavenly measures.”*

As you can clearly see, there is no **rebuke** for the church of Philadelphia.

VERSES 9-10

First of all, who are these people that Jesus calls **“the synagogue of Satan”**?

There were unbelieving Jews in this city of brotherly love who were hostile towards these Christians. But they were Jews by only by name. You see, spiritually speaking they were not connected with Abraham or to the people of faith because that is done as a person believes and receives Jesus as Lord and Savior!

And what happened back then is still happening today. In our society we see tolerance as the new motto we are to follow, and if you don’t agree with what they are saying, what they believe, you are not tolerant; you are hateful, unloving and-so-on.

What is amazing to me is that when we stand up for what we believe, this tolerant group of people becomes very intolerant. They will accept all kinds of immorality and wickedness but when we stand up for the truths of God found in the Word of God, when we love the Lord, they attack us, and I guess they are not very tolerant!

It is as McCarrell said, “*The Philadelphia letter reminds that any true church at any time, and especially during the last days, meets satanic opposition . . . through imitation, religious ritualism, and hypocrisy – opposition strengthened by mixtures of worldliness and religiousness – church and state.*”

Also, what does it mean that they will “**worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you**”?

I believe it is speaking of them recognizing that we are the ones who truly love the Lord. And, in the judgment, they will see that they were not worshiping the Lord!

Now we see the *exhortation* that Jesus gives to this church, and it is two-fold.

In verse 9 Jesus speaks of protecting this weak church from the hostile attacks of the enemy.

Then, the second exhortation is that Jesus will keep those who love Him, who keep His command to preserve, out of the Tribulation Period!

The reason I believe Jesus is speaking of the Tribulation Period here and that Christians will not go through any part of it is as follows.

And if you feel that we are going to go through some or all of the Tribulation Period, I pray that you will listen to what the Scriptures have to say and not close your ears. That you would evaluate what I say with the Word of God and let the Spirit of God show you what is true about this passage. And we will deal with the Rapture again when we get to Revelation chapter 4 because that is a picture of the Rapture, what happens with John.

So let me start out with the word “**persevere.**”

It is a Greek word that means “*faithfulness under pressure.*”

For those who believe in a post Tribulation Rapture of the church, they believe that Jesus is promising His Church that He would protect them through this period of time, the Tribulation Period. They do not believe that He is promising them that they will be taken out before the Tribulation Period starts.

Also, mid-Tribulation and Pre-Wrath must feel the same way, that God is going to preserve them through this period of time and then Rapture them before the wrath of God is poured out.

First of all, as we look at the Tribulation saints, not the church, those who have come to Christ during the Tribulation Period, they are not preserved through this period of time, but millions have been martyred for their faith during this period of time.

One writer put it like this, “Believers in that terrible time will not be preserved. In fact, many will be martyred (6:9– 11; 7:9–14), leading to the conclusion that promising preservation is meaningless if the believers face the same fate as sinners during the Tribulation . . . [to get around this] some hold that the promise of deliverance is only from God’s wrath during the Tribulation - but a promise that God will not kill believers but will allow Satan and Antichrist to do so would provide small comfort to the suffering church at Philadelphia.”

Also, the word “**persevere**” is in the past tense and that tells me that this is something that these Christians have already done before the “**hour of trial.**”

In other words, it is a promise of a reward for past perseverance, and it is not something that God is giving them to equip them to go through the Tribulation Period!

Walvoord put it like this, “*As far as the Philadelphian church was concerned, the rapture of the church was presented to them as an imminent hope.*”

I hope that is clear but if you need more, let me continue on.

Here in Revelation 3:10, the word “**from**” is the Greek word EK and it means “*out of*” or “*away from.*”

Now, what is the Lord keeping us out of or away from? We don’t have to guess because He tells us, “**. . . the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**” Revelation 3:10b.

Do you see that? Jesus doesn’t say He will keep them “*through*” the Tribulation Period. He tells them that He will keep His true Church out of that trial that is coming upon those who dwell on the earth!

And think about this for a minute. If Jesus wanted to tell them that He was going to protect His church through the Tribulation Period, He would have used the Greek prepositions, “en” (in) or “dia” (through). But He used the Greek word EK and thus, Jesus will keep us out of this time of trial that is coming upon the earth dwellers!

Now that is an interesting phrase, “**those who dwell on the earth.**” Don’t we all dwell on the earth.

We live here but this is not our home. Paul tells us in Philippians 3:20-21, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**”

Thus, we are not earth dwellers, we are citizens of heaven, we are just pilgrims and strangers passing through this land on our way home to be with our Lord and one day He will come back for us.

Thus, this trial is a judgment upon the earth dwellers and that speaks of the Tribulation Period, which is a seven-year period of time where God will pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world before the Lord comes back to set up His Kingdom here on the earth with His Bride, the Church.

And so, the church, believers will be raptured out before the Tribulation Period begins as I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and I Corinthians 15:51-58 tells us.

In fact, Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:9, **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

And in II Peter 2:9 we are told, **“then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”**

Thus, we are, **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”** Titus 2:13.

And like I have said, we will deal more with the rapture and what it is all about when we get to Revelation chapter 4 as the church age comes to an end and John is caught up into heaven.

And I do understand that many feel that the wrath of God is not poured out until the trumpet judgments. But when you read of the seals being opened in Revelation chapter 6, who is opening the seals?

Jesus is!

But that does not do it for many, they still think that God’s wrath is not poured out until the trumpet judgments.

Think about that. In these judgments, the seal judgments, we see $\frac{1}{4}$ of the earth's population destroyed! That is some 2 billion people. Make no mistake about it, this is the judgment of God, and these are nothing compared to what is coming, these are the beginning of birth pains and the worst is yet to come as we will see as we go through these judgments of God in our study.

Mark Hitchcock sums up like this for us. He wrote,

Notice Jesus promises to keep His people from the "hour" of testing that is coming upon the whole world. The Lord promises to keep His people not just "from" or "out of" the testing - but from the very "time" ("hour") of the testing.

The exemption of believers is not just from the trials of the Tribulation - but from the very Tribulation itself. This means that the Church will be immune from the very hour or very time period when this testing occurs - that is, from the Tribulation Period itself!

The most natural meaning of this promise is that believers will not be on earth when the hour of trial takes place.

This conclusion is bolstered by the next verse where Jesus says, "I am coming quickly."

The inference is that He will deliver His people from the time of worldwide testing by his coming for them.

This strongly supports the pretribulationists' notion of removal from the time of Tribulation, not the posttribulationists' idea of protection through it. . . .

Revelation 3:10 is a specific, special promise from Jesus that His Bride will be kept from the "hour of testing" or "time of tribulation" that is coming upon the whole world.

This strongly supports the pre-tribulation view of the rapture.

As [Professor John] Walvoord notes, “The event in view here that will deliver the true church from the Tribulation - is the rapture, which must occur prior to the Tribulation for this promise to have its full force.”

- Mark Hitchcock

VERSE 11

When Jesus says He is coming quickly, He is not saying right now, for it has almost been 2,000 years since Jesus wrote this letter to the church.

He can come at any moment, but that is not the point that Jesus is making here.

What He is saying is that when He does come it will be sudden, it will be unexpected!

The *warning* that Jesus gives to this church is simple, “**hold fast what you have.**”

In other words, they needed to keep a firm grip on what they had, they were not to give up, but to forge ahead, don't grow weary.

They needed to continue on because the Lord is coming back, and that message is to us also – ***HOLD FAST!***

But to what are they to hold on fast to?

They were to hold fast to what Jesus said back in Revelation 3:8, “**I know your works.**

See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”

They needed to hold fast to the door that the Lord had opened for them – ***MINISTRY.***

They needed to hold fast to the little strength they had – ***THEIR RELIANCE ON GOD WHERE THEIR STRENGTH CAME FROM.***

And they needed to hold fast in keeping God's Word and not denying His name –

THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS.

Paul admonishes us in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

Don't give up!

The crown that Jesus speaks of here is not the crown of a king, but the Greek word is STEPHANOS or the victors' crown.

Jesus is not speaking of our salvation here because I don't believe the Scriptures teach that a person can lose their salvation.

I believe Jesus is speaking of finishing the race that God has us in, to preserve to the end so we may receive the crown He has for us, the victors' crown!

Paul put it this way as he used his life as an example in II Timothy 4:6-8, **“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”**

But, for those who have made an empty profession of faith, they will not receive this crown because they never were saved!

John tells us in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”**

If you faithfully preserve you are a child of God and you will not lose your salvation because you are saved by faith in the finished work of Christ for you and thus, you will receive the victors' crown, keep persevering until He returns!

VERSE 12

It has been a few years since we were in the Old Testament on Thursdays, but if you remember, in Solomon's Temple there were two pillars. One was called Jachin or "***He will establish.***" The other was called Boaz or "***In Him is strength.***" Both these names are a picture of steadfastness and permanence.

Now, in saying that, keep in mind that the ancient city of Philadelphia suffered many earthquakes and thus, the ground was not stable.

And the ***promise*** to this church is that He would make them a pillar in the New Jerusalem. It speaks of stability, a strong city, no longer is the ground unstable.

And as a pillar, the only thing supporting it is the foundation and our foundation is Jesus!

Not only are we pillars but we shall go out no more. We will be with our Lord forever.

Again, in Philadelphia, when earthquakes hit, they would have to leave their homes and sometimes they left for months because of the aftershocks.

That is interesting and Barclay picks up on this and he makes this point regarding this. He wrote, *“The citizens of Philadelphia lived an unsettled and tremulous life. Whenever the earthquake tremors came, and they came often, the people of Philadelphia fled from the city out into the open country, to escape the falling masonry and the flying stones which accompanied a severe earthquake shock. Then, when the earth was quiet again, they returned. In their fear the people of Philadelphia were always out and coming in; they were always fleeing from the city and then returning to it.”*

But for us, we shall go out no more because we are secure in Christ!

And did you notice we will have three names written upon us.

First, we have the name of God, and according to Jeremiah 23:6 it is **“the LORD our righteousness.”** (Yahweh Tsidkenu)

Then we will have the name of the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from God.

And lastly, we will have the new name of the Lord Jesus.

What is the significance of this?

You only write your name on what belongs to you, and we belong to the Lord and He puts His name upon us!

You see, because we identify with Christ by faith, He will identify Himself with us!

VERSE 13

We once again see that Jesus closes with these words – **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** Revelation 3:13.

Do you have spiritual ears to hear what the Spirit of God is saying to you and are you willing to apply these lessons to your life? He wants you to!

As I bring this study to a close, let me say this.

Everyone wants to be a Philadelphia church, for there is only good spoken of this church by Jesus.

Now, I do believe that this church here in Manitowoc, this body of believers is a Philadelphia church.

And please, I understand that we are perfect, there are no perfect churches and if you are anything like me, you have a way to go.

But I see this church love the Word of God and desire to apply it to their life.

I see this church in love with Jesus, believing in all that His name stands for.

And that is a great joy to me. We don't have much strength on our own, but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

And look at all that God has done in and through this church.

But don't rest upon that, look ahead to what God is doing now and keep forging ahead in the work, don't give up!

Let me leave you with these words from Paul in Colossians 3:1-4 as he admonishes us, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

Let us continue on until He comes for us, His Bride!