

“The Things Which Are” (Rev 2:1-3:22)
The Seven Churches in Asia
Part 3 – The Church at Sardis & Philadelphia

Text: Revelation 3:1-13

Main Idea: Christ exhorts the remnant of a dead Church (Sardis) to be revived, while encouraging the faithful church (Philadelphia) to continue faithfully.

1. Church of Sardis: The ___Dead___ Church. (3:1-6)

- **Title of Jesus:** The One who sovereignly works through the Holy Spirit (7 spirits) & godly leaders (7 stars). (Is 11:2, Zech 4:1-10)
- **Concern:** Though the Church seemed to be **alive** from man’s perspective & the activity of the Church, they were really dead characterized by inward decay and populated by unredeemed people playing church. (v. 1d, 2b)
- **Commendation:** There are only a **few** faithful regenerate people who walked with Christ. (v. 4)
- **Exhortation:** The faithful must 1) wake up, 2) strengthen what remains, 3) remember what they received and heard, 4) keep the truths of Scripture, & 5) repent of their sins. (v. 2a, 3) (KEYS FOR **Revival**)
- **Promise:** Those who overcome will be rewarded with 1) white garments (eternal purity), 2) will continue to have their names in the book of life, & 3) Jesus will confess their name before His Father & the angels. (5-6)

2. Church of Philadelphia: The ___Faithful___ Church. (3:7-13)

- **Title of Jesus:** Jesus is Holy, True & Sovereign. (v. 7)
- **Commendation:** Because of their faithfulness in keeping the word, not denying His name, and persevering, Jesus promised them opportunity, vindication & preservation. (v. 8-11a)

3 Promises made to the Philadelphia Church:

- 1) **Opportunity:** Jesus put an open door for the **Gospel** to go forth before them that no one could shut. (v. 8, 1 Cor 16:8-9, 2 Cor 2:12, Col 4:2-3)
 - 2) **Vindication:** Jesus promises that the enemies of the church would come and **bow** down at their feet and learn that God loved them (salvation). (v. 9)
 - 3) **Deliverance:** Jesus will **keep them from** the hour of testing (**Tribulation**) that was about to come upon the whole world to test those who *dwell on the earth* (see handout). (v. 10-11, Jn 17:15)
- **Exhortation:** Hold fast & persevere showing that you are genuine so that no one will take your crown. (v. 11b)
 - **Promise:** The one who overcomes will 1) be made a permanent and immovable **pillar** in heaven with eternal security & glory, 2) be owned having the name of God written on him, 3) have the name of the city of heaven written on them signifying eternal citizenship, & 4) have Christ's new name written on them.

Who are the “earth dwellers” in Revelation?

This is directly out of “*101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation*” by Mark Hitchcock, page 91-93. Harvest House Publishers, 2012.

“Beginning in Revelation 3:10, an interesting group of people are introduced as “those who dwell on the earth,” or what we might call “earth dwellers.” This description is found eleven times in nine verses (3:10, 6:10, 8:13, 11:10 [twice]; 13:8, 12, 14 [twice] 17:2, 8). Who are these “earth dwellers” that Revelation mentions so frequently?

The term originates in the Old Testament, as do many New Testament terms. As Thomas Ice notes, “Every global use of ‘earth dwellers’ in the Old Testament appears in a judgment context....It is of special significance that both ‘earth dwellers’ and ‘world dwellers’ are used multiple times in Isaiah 24-27, often called ‘Isaiah’s Apocalypse.’”

Ice provides an excellent overview of this group of people:

Since one of the main purposes of the judgments of the tribulation are to ‘punish’ (Isa 26:21) or “test” (Rev 3:10) the earth dwellers, it is important to know what this means.....When we survey the eleven uses of ‘earth dwellers’ in Revelation we see an interesting composite that develops. Not only are they to be tested in order to show their true metal [sic] (3:10), they are clearly identified as those who are persecuting and killing believers during the tribulation (6:10). Many of the judgments of the tribulation are targeted for the “earth dwellers” (8:13). It is the “earth dwellers” who rejoice and send gifts to one another when the two witnesses are killed in Jerusalem during the middle of the tribulation (11:10). When the Beast (antichrist) is introduced in Revelation 13, it is noted that “all who dwell on the earth will worship him” (13:8, 12). Thus 100 % of the “earth dwellers” receive the mark of the beast and will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. During the tribulation, as followers of the Beast, the “earth dwellers” will be deceived by the false signs and wonders of the Beast and will erect an image of the Beast, likely in the Jewish Temple (13:14). While the target of the preaching of the gospel by an angelic messenger will be “earth dwellers” (14:6), not a single one of them will follow the lamb, instead they will wonder after the Beast (17:8).

The earth dwellers, then, are unsaved people who, during the Tribulation, stubbornly and steadfastly continue in their rejection of God. They are those on earth who are totally given up to evil and the hatred of God and His people. The entire horizon of their lives is earthbound.”

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Sardis - The dead church

(3:1a) "To the angel (messenger) of the church in Sardis write:

Σάρδεις (Sardeis) SARDIS = a plural of uncertain derivation.

Believed to be a derivative of Sardius or “red stone” and was once one of the stones in the high priest’s breastplate (sardine, sardonyx or possibly Ruby). This stone was once considered precious and now there is no real certainty as to the identity of the stone and some suggestions are because the stone became common and lost it’s value.

The city

Sardis was one of the earliest cities in Asia dating back to before 2000 B.C. and was by far the wealthiest at it’s peak during the Lydian empire (1200 B.C.). Gold and silver “Lydian Staters” were the first coins in the world—in about the sixth century B.C. Its patron deity was the goddess Cybele, who known as Diana in Ephesus. Midas, king of Phrygia was her son and played an important role in the mythology of the city.

According to Greek mythology, Midas was granted a wish for anything by Dionysus, god of wine, because of his hospitality. His request was that everything he touched would turn to gold. The folly of his greed came to light when he realized that he could no longer eat or drink due to the fact that everything he touched indeed turned to gold. But Dionysus instructed Midas to bath in the Pactolus River in order to wash away his gifted power that turned curse. This is how the Greeks explained all of the gold that they were able to retrieve from the Pactolus River.



Gold and silver “Lydian Staters” were the first coins in the world—in about the sixth century B.C.

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The City itself was located about 30 miles south of Thyatira. The lower city was in the valley of the Hermus River, but it was the acropolis that was legendary for its **seemingly impregnable** stature. It rose some 1500 feet above the valley floor and was only approachable from one side. All of the other sides were sheer cliffs. Even though the newer expanded city had to be in the foothills, the older city on the acropolis became the refuge when the city was attacked.

The cities strategic geography caused the inhabitants to become **over confident and complacent**, resulting in their lowered guard. What seemed impregnable, was overcome through their neglect and ignorance.

When besieged by the Persians in 549 B.C., Croesus, then king of Lydia, left unguarded the precipitous cliffs on three sides of the city. After a 14-day siege, Cyrus offered a reward to any man who could find a way of scaling the apparently unscalable cliffs. One of his soldiers, Hyeroeades, noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the battlements and noted his path to retrieve it, thus revealing an unguarded oversight. In the darkness of the following night, Hyeroeades and a Persian party climbed the cliff and clambered over the unguarded battlements to take the city. But the Sardians did not learn their lesson: in 214 B.C. the formidable cliffs again proved susceptible to a hazardous climb when Lagoras repeated the exploit of Hyeroeades and the city was similarly taken by Antiochus. Hegel said "History teaches that man learns nothing from history." The Sardians were not watchful.

- from Chuck Missler's commentary on Revelation [pg 72]

History repeated

- 549 B.C. Fell to the Persians.
- 501 B.C. Burned by the Ionians.
- 334 B.C. Surrendered to Alexander the Great.
- 322 B.C. Taken by Antigonus.
- 214 B.C. Fell to the Seleucids.

Sardis came under Roman control in 133 B.C. It was struck by an earthquake that caused major damage in 17 A.D.. Emperor Tiberius provided the city with the resources it needed to rebuild and a temple was built to honor him. By the time of the writing of the Revelation, Sardis was a mere shadow of what it once was. Eventually the town was destroyed by the Turkic conqueror Tamerlane in 1402. Today the little town of Sart has only fragments of its proud history. One of the greatest ironies is that the hot springs of Sardis were supposed to be empowered by the gods to give life to the dead.

The city of Sardis and the church there had lost their **vitality**.

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The Acropolis at Sardis rose some 1500 feet above the valley of the Hermus River.



The temple of Cybele (Artemis or Diana)



The lower city viewed from the acropolis



The Gymnasium-Bathhouse build in the 2nd century A.D. was over 5 acres in size.



Sardis had one of the largest and wealthiest Jewish communities as this synagogue located in the middle of the urban center shows. It is one of the largest ancient synagogues ever excavated.

The church

This is another church who's founding has no exact record, but was probably another church that had been born out of Paul's ministry at Ephesus. The Bishop of Sardis, Melito, was an apologist and wrote the earliest known commentaries on Revelation in the late second century. There is no mention of persecution, false teaching or false living. The enemy never attacks what is **not perceived as a threat**.

The title of Christ

(3:1b) **"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this:"**

Christ again uses a title of Himself that was depicted in the vision given of Him in chapter 1. The "seven Spirits" represents the seven fold **Holy Spirit**:

"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD." Is 11:2 (NASB)

It is interesting to note that the title Christ uses of Himself here does not have the same overtones of fiery judgement as in the case of Thyatira even though there are serious implications in the name, history and condition of the church at Sardis. Christ is focusing in on **what is missing** from them. No church can **be alive to God** without the presence of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of true believers and is the giver of Life in Christ.

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; {that is} the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, {but} you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." John 14:16-17 (NASB)

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of {God's own} possession, to the praise of His glory." Eph 1:13,14 (NASB)

Christ also has the "seven stars" which, as noted before, are the messengers or elders of the seven churches. Christ's sovereignty over His church is in mind here specifically through those who are the faithful shepherds of the flock. Christ has called overseers to teach God's word and believers are instructed to be under Godly teaching:

"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." 1 Tim 4:16 (NASB)

Not only is this church void of the Holy Spirit, it is void of **"God - owned" shepherds**.

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“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

Col 1:28 (NASB)

Churches void of faithful shepherds and teachers will often lead to **dead churches**.

The concern (note no commendation)

(3:1c, 2b) **“I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead...for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.”**

Christ continually establishes His **omniscience** as He is able to “know our deeds”. In the case of the church at Sardis, His penetrating eye of judgement revealed that they were Christian **in name only**. To be dead is to be **unredeemed** as Paul puts forth in his letter to the Ephesians:

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly {places} in Christ Jesus,”

Eph 2: 1-6 (NASB)

The word name comes from *onoma* = label; being **covered by a name**. They were putting on the “**clothing**” of Christianity and playing church. Some of the signs of a dead church are that the emphasis is on superficial things such as:

- **liturgical forms** (legalistic appearances)
- **curing social ills** rather than teaching the truth about sin
- **caring more about what men think** than what God says
- being more enamored with **man-made creeds** than doctrine; etc.

Christ did not know them, just as He did not know the unredeemed of the Sanhedrin:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. “You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Mat 23:25-28 (NASB)

The exhortation

(3:2a, 3-4) **“Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die;...’So remember what you have received and heard; and keep {it,} and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. ’But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”**

Even though this church is in desperate shape, there were a few oasis’s of genuine faith remaining. They were not being stained by false teaching or wicked behavior and were given the promise to receive the white garment that all believers will receive (v.5 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:8, 14).

The white represents **perfection in holiness** and these garments are worn by Christ (Mat 17:2; Mar 9:3) and by the holy angels (Mat 28:3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10). For whatever reason, however, they were not having an impact on the rest of the church. Remember that the letters are given to the elders of the church and in this case they are told to “wake up”. Christ says to them “you have a few people...” indicating that they are not counted as the few who are still alive.

But the Great physician not only gives the right prognosis, but also provides the remedy. If they are to rescue the dying church they need to practice:

- **Watchfulness:** They needed to “wake up” from their slumber. As Christians, we are to be watchful of the wiles of the devil (1 Pet 5:8), Temptation (Mt 26:41), the coming of Christ (Mt 24:42, 43; Mk 13:37; 1 Thess 5:6) and false teachers (Acts 20:29-31).
- **Diligence:** “strengthen the things that remain” These “things” represent the things of the Spirit without which their fire would go out.
- **Faithfulness:** “remember what you have received and heard”. This is an exhortation to rebuild a solid foundation built on the truth about Christ, sin, salvation and sanctification.
- **Obedience:** They needed to “keep” what they had been taught and not just have the knowledge of it.
- **Confession:** They needed to “repent” from their slumber which would mean real change from their indifference.

The promise to the overcomer

(3:5-6) **“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

It is important to not twist the promise of Christ here to a threat. Remember that those who overcome are those who are chosen in Him before the foundation of the World. Therefore by the grace and promises of Christ **genuine salvation produces the overcomer** - one who remains true to the end. There is no license here to assume that those who are not overcomers were ever in the book of life to begin with.

Contrary to those who are “earth dweller’s”, overcomer’s names are not only written in the book of life, but they are proudly presented by the Bridegroom before the Holy counsel of God and the heavenly host; imagine Christ being proud of us - the redeemed. Romans 8: 28-39 reveals the promise of God to His own.

The prophetic profile

The alarming implications of Sardis are on what has come out of the reformation. Early church history and 1,200 years of the Catholic church had never witnessed the “**smorgasbord**” of Christianity that the reformation produced . The reformers re-established the foundation of salvation by grace and reformed many of the absolutely corrupt teachings of the powerful Catholic church of their time and new life was brought forth as a result. It was through the reformation that the Bible was again becoming the basis of authority and not the church. Widespread printing and increase in literacy made the expansion of the reformation in the 16th century possible, but this new found freedom gave rise to a multitude of “brands” of Christianity.

16th Century

1517 Lutheranism Martin Luther
1521 Anabaptists Scandanavian Lutherans
1523 Swinglianism Huldreich Zwingli
1534 Anglicanism Henry VIII
1536 Mennonites Menno Simons
1536 Calvinism John Calvin
1540s German Reformed Church
1550s Hungarian Reformed Church
1560s French Calvinists (Huguenots)
1560s Scottish Presbyterians John Knox
1560s Congregationalism Puritans
1570s Dutch Reformed Church

17th Century

1606 English Baptists John Smyth
1647 Quakers George Fox
1690 Amish Jacom Ammon

18th & 19th Century

1739 Methodism John Wesley
1785 Protestant Episcopal Church
1800 United Brethren in Christ
1819 Unitarianism William Channing
1831 Disciples of Christ Thomas Campbell
1863 Seventh-Day Adventists William Miller
1865 Salvation Army William Booth
1879 Christian Science Mary Baker Eddy
1914 Assemblies of God

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Although the earlier years of the reformation produced a lot of new life, the monstrous “tree” of denominational churches has become vulnerable to a variety of erroneous teaching, some of which are the following:

- “Soft” hermeneutical traditions and calling the clarity of scripture into question.
- Denial of the Millennial Reign (even though promised).
- Denial of Israel’s prophetic destiny (even though promised).
- Absence of Biblical devotional life.
- De-emphasis of the Gospel of Christ - more than one way to God.
- Ordination of homosexuals and the belief that they were created that way.
- Denial of the total depravity of man.

Like Sardis many of the post reformation churches have become large “shells” that have the name Christian and yet not the true content. The modern church has surrendered much of it’s mandate especially in western cultures and in doesn’t even know that the “Persians” are scaling the embattlements. Sleep will give way to destruction as the winds of the apostate church have begun to blow. Remember that we are to be transformed in our hearts and minds, but postmodern and relativistic thought processes have infiltrated the contemporary church to great peril. Without strong adherence to the truth of scripture and application of it, no individual Christian or church will be able to stand in times of testing; know where you stand lest you fall!

“Be dressed in readiness, and {keep} your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open {the door} to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself {to serve,} and have them recline {at the table,} and will come up and wait on them.”

Luk 12: 9-17 (NASB)

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Session 8 - Revelation 3:7-13

Philadelphia - The faithful church

(3:7a) "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:"

phile, friendship, affection; delphus, city; => City of friendship.

Philadelphia derived its name from the nickname of Attalus II whose nickname was Philadelphus or "brother lover". He was the younger brother of King Eumenes II who was King of Pergamos. Attalus II and Eumenes were very close as brothers and the coins from here had the brothers rendered on them; Attalus II on one side and Eumenes on the other. The depictions showed them as equal in stature.

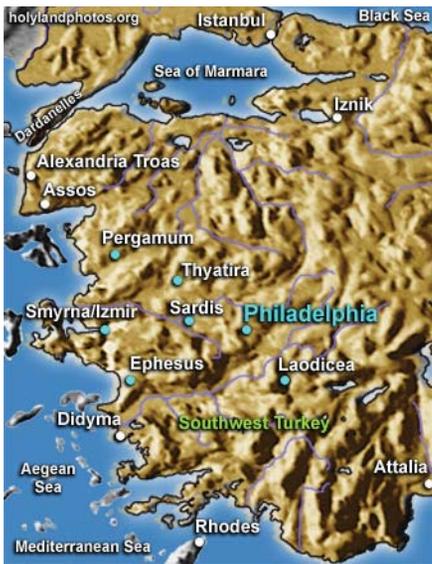
The city

Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven cities. It was built on land acquired by Pergamos in 189 B.C. Like most cities in Hellenistic culture, it was situated on an acropolis for purposes of defense. Its height was 800 ft. above the Cogamis River and located about 30 miles South-East of Sardis. Unlike Thyatira whose main purpose was a military outpost, the primary intent of the establishment of Philadelphia was to create a major Greek culture and Language center that would be a springboard for spreading Hellenistic culture out to the regions of Lydia and Phrygia. The "mission" was so effective that by A.D. 19 the Lydian language was completely replaced by Greek.

The geography of Philadelphia was well suited for wine production and the primary deity of Philadelphia was Dionysus, the god of wine. The city was located in the region deemed the "burned land" because of the volcanic activity. It too was severely impacted by the powerful earthquake in A.D. 17 that devastated Sardis and ten other cities. Philadelphia was also a city who was a beneficiary of the support of Emperor Tiberius after the earthquake and also built to him a monument. The city went one step further to rename the city Neocaesarea ("New City of Caesar"). During Vespasian's reign, the city took on his family name of Flavia. Eventually the name Philadelphia was re-established.

The church

The church at Philadelphia was another established by the ministry outreach of the Ephesian church. Ignatius, an early church father, passed through the city and even sent them a letter of encouragement and instruction. When Polycarp was martyred at Smyrna, there were some Christians from Philadelphia that were martyred with him. In spite of early Jewish persecution, the church at Philadelphia remained faithful and endured until eventually they were overrun by Muslims in the mid-fourteenth century.



The remaining columns of an ancient Byzantine Church in Philadelphia.

The title of Christ

(3:7b) **“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:”**

For the first time in these letters, Christ does not pull from the descriptors of Himself given to John in the vision of Christ in Chapter 1. Christ is establishing His divine nature in using distinct Old Testament terminology to speak to what is **intrinsically** His by nature and is the success of the character of the believers in Philadelphia. Here we see Christ's;

● Holiness

God is entirely holy. His name is holy (Ps 30:4), His character is holy (Ps 77:13), His sanctuary is holy (Ps 28:2) and His word is holy (Ps 105:42).

God is seen as the “Holy One” throughout the Old Testament: (2 Kin 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Pro 9:10; Is 29:19; 30:15; 40:25 are just some examples).

Christ is proclaimed “holy” at His birth (Luke 1:35), in His death (Act 2:27; Ps 16:10) and is now the holy high Priest to all who believe (Heb 7:25)

He is proclaimed as “the Holy One of God” by Peter (John 6:69) and even the demons in the synagogue at Capernum proclaimed "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" (Mk 1:24)

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Therefore, the believer's mandate is holiness:

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts {which were yours} in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all {your} behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY. " " 1 Pet. 14-16 (NASB)

See also 2 Pet 3:11; Rom 12:1

- **Truth** (αληθινός) alēthinos = That which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name, in every respect corresponding to the idea signified by the name, real, true genuine.

Christ is described as holy and true many times in Revelation; (6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 11). There is no truth apart from the source of truth and the kingdom is entered into only through truth:

"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3 (NASB)

"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." John 3:21 (NASB)

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23-24 (NASB)

The kingdom is sustained and advanced through genuine believers and the only way for genuine believers to be born is through the faithful teaching of the "true gospel":

"But {it was} because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you." Gal 2:4-5 (NASB)

See also Gal 2:14; Eph 1:13; Col 1:5

- **Gods sovereignty**

In scripture, a key represents the one who has authority as seen in 1:18; 9:1; and 20:1. In Matthew 16 and 18 Christ gives the keys to the kingdom to His ambassadors. David is also referenced later in 5:5 and 22:16 and is symbolic of the **Messianic office** of Christ.

The specific term "key of David" is a reference from Isaiah 22: 20-25 where Eliakim was given the key of David as the Prime Minister to the king and he had the authority to allow or deny access to the king. The only entrance into the Messianic kingdom is through Jesus Christ, the holder of the key. Jesus is also shown to hold the keys of death and hell in 1:18. He is the ultimate authority over the **eternal destiny** of all created things.

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Christ doesn't only have the authority over the kingdom, He exercises it. What He does, is in perfect harmony with His predetermined will and what He does cannot be **contended**:

"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And {among} the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" Dan 4:35 (NASB)

Romans 9 tells us that there is not a single soul who is redeemed apart from the Lord's sovereign design for it to be that way. We are to witness out of **obedience** (Mat 28: 18-20). But we by no means are to change the "holy" and "true" message in order to gain the appearance of success. It is vital to understand that God alone gives the **increase** (1 Cor 3:5-7) and so when it seems as though we aren't "succeeding" Jesus Himself tells us how to respond:

"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet." Mat 10:14 (NASB)

The commendation - (note no concern)

(3:8-11a) **"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. 'Behold, I will cause {those} of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie--I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and {make them} know that I have loved you. '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 on the earth. I am coming quickly;"**

The omnipotence, omnipresence and intimacy of Christ are seen in the His knowledge of ALL of their deeds. The open door here can be seen as opportunity for service within their own fellowship and as an opportunity for the body as a whole to spread the gospel in Philadelphia and beyond. Paul refers to the "open door" in regards to the gospel going out on several occasions (1 Cor 16:8-9; 2 Cor 2:12). In Colossians, Paul seeks prayer for the opportunity to spread the gospel:

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with {an attitude of} thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak." Col 4:2-4 (NASB)

The "gift" of the open door was granted to them because of the fact that they were faithful. Their "little power" was not little in effectiveness, but in that they were in the minority compared to their world. Yet they kept Christ's word and did not deny His name. Their perseverance proved genuine faith. No believer is perfect, but through it all a believer stays in the race and finishes:

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“Not that I have already obtained {it} or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of {it} yet; but one thing {I do:} forgetting what {lies} behind and reaching forward to what {lies} ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Phil 3 :12-14 (NASB)

As was the case for Smyrna, there was a population of Jews in Philadelphia that launched a continual campaign of persecution on these believers. These Jews are also labeled by Christ as being of the synagogue of Satan. Christ does not rebuke them for being Jews, He instead claims that they are not Jews. The true Jew has been circumcised “in the heart, by the Spirit” according to Paul (Rom 2: 28-29).

The justice of God will prevail and the promise to the persecuted Christians here is that the Jews will bow at their feet and know that God has loved them. It’s not that they will be worshipped, but will be exonerated for their faithfulness by those who hated them. This same justice will be true of :

- Christ when **He returns** (Phil 2:10-11).
- Israel in her future **restoration to faith** (Rom 11:25; Zech 12:10).
- **The church** (Rev 19)
- The saints from the **Old Testament** and the **Great Tribulation** (Rev 20)

Interestingly enough, it is supposed that many of the Jews who persecuted these believers eventually did come to repentance and offer up a spirit of contrition toward those whom they persecuted. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, in a letter to the church at Philadelphia alludes to this.

The amazing promise made to the faithful church is that they will be kept from the hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole world. This text reveals that hour of testing is:

- **Future** - “the hour which is about to come”
- **Brief** - “hour of testing”
- **Worldwide** - “come upon the whole world”
- To “test those who **dwell upon the earth**”

Session 8 - Revelation 3:7-13

A sweep through scripture can easily identify this event. Daniel's 70 week prophecy (of which this is the 70th; Dan 9:25-27), the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer 30:7) and the Great Tribulation (Mat 24) are just some of the detailed references to this time. The term "earth dweller" is a typical description of unbelievers in Revelation (6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:2,8). Revelation 6 -18 cover this time of testing and a careful study of the entire event will uncover two of it's main purposes.

(1.) The judgement of the nations and the final harvest: earth dwellers will either be given a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false (2 Thes 2:11), or will become identified with the believing tribulation saints.

(2.) The judgement and redemption of Israel: The other purpose of the tribulation will be to move Israel to national repentance so that they will cry out to Jesus whom they will receive as their messiah. This will be given to the surviving remnant of Israel.

There has been much debate over the meaning of "keep you from" (tēreō ek). Those who contend that the church will remain on earth through the Great Tribulation hold to the view that this means that the church will be preserved through the hour of testing, not removed. There are two main reasons to dispute this:

● Linguistic

The preposition ek means "from", "away from" or "out from". The preposition that means "through" is dia and would have been used here if the understanding was to be "preserved through". There is only one other time that this particular combination is used. In John 17:15, Christ prays to His Father to "keep them (His disciples) from the evil one". We are not "preserved" in the evil one, but are delivered "out of" the bondage of sin and Satan. We are delivered out of darkness into light (Acts 26:18).

● Biblical Context

If "ek" is to be understood as being preserved through the hour of testing, it would seem to contradict the fact that most who "pass the test" and refuse to be identified with the false christ will be martyred (6:9-11; 7:9-14). Only the 144,000 witnesses who are Jewish will be sealed by God. Even though tribulation and martyrdom have been a constant reality for the whole church throughout history, this time of testing will be unlike anything that the world has ever seen.

This is the first time that Christ's "coming" is not referring to an earthly judgment carried out on rebellious churches. This coming is for the deliverance of His church (2 thes 2:1) and will open the door for the hour of testing; that hour which ends in His day of judgement on the earth. His coming is imminent as denoted by "quickly".

The exhortation

(3:11b) **“hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”**

The constant paradox of scripture is that those who are believers “must” obey as we are commanded (Col 1:22-23; John 3:36; Heb 5:9) and by the Holy Spirit we “will” obey Him (Acts 5:32; 1 Pet 1:1-2).

The crown is eternal life. 2 John 8 calls it our full reward. 2 Tim 4:8 calls it the crown of righteousness and 1 Pet 5:4 calls it the crown of glory. The proper perspective to always remember is that Christ Himself says that He will lose none of whom the Father has “given” to Him. In fact John clearly states the reality of those who abandon the faith:

“They went out from us, but they were not {really} of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but {they went out,} so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

1 John 2:19 (NASB)

The promise to the overcomer

(3:12-13) **“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 on 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. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

Christ promises four eternal blessings to the overcomer (genuine Christian):

- To be **made a pillar** in the temple of God - A pillar is a prominent and permanent part of a structure and so will be the overcomer in heaven.
- To be inscribed with the **name of God** - God owns us as his prize possession.
- To be inscribed with the name of the **new Jerusalem** - We will have full clearance to Jerusalem, the eternal capital city. This is the ultimate V.I.P. pass
- To be given the new **name of Christ** - completes our intimacy with Him

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

1 John 3:2 (NASB)

The prophecy of Philadelphia

At the time of John's letter, Philadelphia was judged by Christ as a local church that had been faithful to their ambassadorship and the great commission. She was poised as a bastion of light shining forth in the midst of the dead church and the apostate church. While faithful Christians have always proclaimed the gospel, modernity has provided some of the most well known, widespread movements of Christian witness and growth. Philadelphia can be seen in many of the revivals that began around 1750 giving birth to the modern missionary movement. The Word of God has been translated into most known languages while modern travel and technology have made the "practical" effectiveness of missionary outreach greater than what was possible before in world history.

“ This open door found such men as David Livingstone, Jonathan Goforth, and literally thousands of other people going out to Africa, China, Japan, Korea, India, South America, and the islands of the sea.”

pg 55 Revelation illustrated & made plain by Tim LaHaye

Just like the ancient city of Philadelphia stayed true to promoting the Hellenistic culture throughout Asia minor, the Philadelphia church, at any point in history, remains faithful to spread the gospel and to be true ambassadors for Christ in how their faith is lived out by seeking to be Christ - like.