

Revelation 3:7-13 | “To The Church At Philadelphia”

Background On Philadelphia

A city in Asia Minor, about twenty-five miles south-east from Sardis and about seventy miles east of Smyrna. It derived its name from its builder, King Attains Philadelphus. It was the seat of one of the seven churches (Rev. 3:7–13).

The circumstances in which this Church was founded are unknown. In the 14th cent. the city was a Christian stronghold and withstood several sieges by the Turks.

This church is so highly commended by Christ that we shouldn't be surprised that the city still remains and that in it the Christian faith is still professed. Its modern name is *Alla-shehr*, “city of God” or high town. Tradition has it that one of the buildings now occupied as a Turkish mosque was the identical church in which assembled the primitive Christians addressed in the Revelation.

Verse–By–Verse Notes

Verse 7

- * The Jewish imagery here indicates that there was likely quite a bit of tension between the Jews and Christians in Philadelphia. A letter by Ignatius of Antioch in the late 1st/early 2nd century also indicates this.
- * The general thought by commentators is that the Christians had been expelled from the local synagogue by the Jews. The Messianic language of Jesus in this verse takes on new meaning if that is the case – He is the true Davidic king who is sovereign over entrance into the Messianic kingdom.

Verse 8

- * Philadelphia is one of two churches that have no rebuke – Smyrna was the other. Jesus commends Philadelphia for its faithfulness to His name.
- * The “open door” of verse 8 could either be: 1) an opportunity for evangelism; 2) a reference to entrance into the Messianic kingdom (this is likely in view of the Messianic language of verse 7); OR 3) it could simultaneously be *both*.
- * The phrase “little power” likely means the church at Philadelphia was small and had little influence on the culture around them.
 - o Chuck Swindoll's comments are insightful here: “*The size of a congregation, the limitations of its location, or the restrictions of its budget should never determine its vision. Instead, churches should set their vision based on the power of their God. God is infinite, magnificent, awesome, and mighty—beyond description or comprehension! When He chooses to open opportunities, the possibilities are endless. All we need to do is trust and follow Him wherever He leads.*”

Verse 9

- * The Jews' slander and persecution of the Christians in Philadelphia is what made them "of the synagogue of Satan" because that's what he does – he is our chief adversary, slandering and persecuting the people of God.
- * Jews relied on their ethnic and national identity for inclusion in the people of God, but in the New Covenant, *faith in Christ alone* is the means by which one becomes a part of the people of God. This was likely the heart of the conflict between the Jews and the Christians in Philadelphia.

Verse 10

- * Here we see the twin doctrines of *perseverance* and *preservation* – we keep Christ because He keeps us.
- * The sense is not that Jesus will protect us from the physical suffering of trial, but that he keeps us *through* it. The Greek preposition ἐκ that is translated "from" can mean a variety of things – it can mean *from, out, in, by, at*, or a number of other things. So what Jesus is promising here is consistent with everything else in Scripture, that he will keep us *through whatever we go through*.
- * There is a promise of special protection when things get really bad – that's what this is.

Verse 11

- * Be careful not to read too much into that word "soon" which in the counsel of God, does not necessarily mean "right away" or "today." "Soon" is still today.

Verse 12

- * This is more messianic language that would have been extremely encouraging by those who were expelled by Jews.

Verse 13

- * Again this is the general call to all the church: hear and respond.

BIG TAKEAWAY: PERSERVERE EVEN WHEN PERSECUTED BY THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE.