

NASB 1977 Philadelphia, The Faithful Church With an Open Door
Revelation 3:7 - 13

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

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: 8 ‘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. 9 ‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 ‘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 upon the earth. 11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown. 12 ‘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 upon 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. 13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

This is now the 6th of 7 letters to 7 churches in Asia Minor, which is now Turkey, that the Lord of the church, Jesus, is writing to the little church at Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was a small place, inconsequential in the world's eyes. Founded by a man named Eumenes who was it's first king, but left it to his brother Attalus who faithfully loved his brother in such an extraordinary sense that he had that nickname. And the town got his nickname. Philadelphia meant brotherly love.

It is remembered for it's wonderful soil, full of volcanic ash that made it particularly fertile. And also known for it's earthquakes. By the time Jesus writes this letter to the church here, it had been brought low and rebuilt several times. In 17AD it was leveled by an earthquake and rebuilt by

Tiberius, and thus entered Ceasar worship.

Now, by way of reminder, each of these letters and each of these churches has four possible ways to look at them. They are all actual churches at an actual place in actual time. 96AD is the assigned date. These churches all existed and the commendations and or condemnations for who they were and what they were doing, were relevant in that moment in time. Real churches in real places with real people that received these letters.

But they also represent types. 7 types of christians. We have ephesus type christians. Doctrinally sound. Rejecting error. Holding on to truth. But loveless. We have Thyatira type christians. Hopelessly entangled with the world.

They also represent 7 types of churches. A smyrna type church would be one that is pure and true in a situation of immense pressure of persecution and even death. A pergammum type church would be one that has much going well for it, love is present, good works are present, but they have become tolerant of false teachers and false doctrine, and tolerant of sin.

So 7 real churches in place and time, 7 predominant types of churches during the entire church age, 7 predominant types of individual believers in the church, and finally;

Each of these churches represents an age, an era, in the history of the church, all the way to the end. So they roughly represent prophetic eras. With lots of disclaimer and overlap we might say, the Ephesus era of the church was from inception at Pentecost to maybe 100 AD. Then we might say the Smyrna era of the persecuted church was 100 - 320 AD. Then perhaps we could argue that the Pergammum era was from 320 - 620 AD. The beginnings of Papism.

Then comes the long darkness of perhaps 620 to 1520. 900 years of papal darkness. The bible is literally unknown to the remnant of true believers who in mostly ignorance cry out to Jesus in simple faith like the thief on the

cross for salvation. Then from 1520 to 1720 we have the dead church. Any remnant being saved is in spite of the church, not because of it. But also in that age, a few remember and repent. The reformation is begun. The bible is translated into the peoples language.

Then from 1720 to perhaps 1950, the philadelphian era is the missionary era of the church. The bible is taken and translated into languages all over the globe. A great harvest all over the earth.

And then finally, in my lifetine, the lukewarm church which we will see in the next few weeks or month lasts until at the repture, Jesus vomits that church out of His mouth.

So then, this week we have the pleasure to study this church, which is for any thinking christian, the model that we want to emulate. We may be in a predominantly laodicean era at this point, but by choice, we want to do what this church did. This is who we want to be, not lukewarm in any way.

We can tell that this church is special to Jesus, right at the beginning, because unlike any of the other letters, the correspondent here, who is Jesus, goes beyond the vision of the glorified Son of chapter 1 to identify Himself. All of the other letters have components of that vision in chapter 1

Here He is more intimate. Here He is decidedly more old testament in how He speaks to the church. These are people of the book who study God's word and who understand the symbolisms here very well. Their book, at this point, is the Old Testament. This letter has that flavor. Like the author of the book speaking in language that the people of the book will immediately understand.

Here we consider some exciting things about Jesus that go beyond the vision in chapter 1. Let's begin. This is so wonderful, I'm not sure how far we'll get this morning.

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

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:

He who is holy. And here, we begin with the attributes of God, alone. Jesus is speaking to a rich young politician with everything going for him from the world's standpoint in Mark chapter 10, and He says something that is a foundational truth.

17 As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up and knelt before Him. "Good Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call Me good?" Jesus replied. "No one is good except God alone. Mk. 10:17,18

Let that sink in. No one is good except God alone. So here Jesus makes a claim to deity. 7*"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy,*

It was Jesus who said no one is good except God alone. And it is Jesus who writes describing Himself as the correspondent of this letter, as the ONE who IS holy.

There are volumes written by synagogues of satan that claim, Jesus never claimed to be God. That's an invented Jesus, they say. He was just a man to emulate. A very good man we should all try to live like, but He never said He was God. The apostles and the church did that, not Jesus.

John has a vision of Jesus, glorified, in heaven, and is told by Him to write these letters. He dictates these things to John. Whoever this is, in the vision, is telling John to write these things down and deliver them to the 7 pastors to be read to the churches.

That correspondent, is Jesus, and He describes Himself as holy. That leaves only one conclusion. Either this is made up nonsense, or this person giving the dictation to write in the letters, is in fact God. Jesus is God. Jesus is holy. Sinless. Perfect. God.

Then He makes another claim that is only possible for deity.

7“*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:*
He who is holy, who is true, (HE) who IS true.

We are embarking upon a whole new world that these readers and churches never imagined for one moment. Out along highway 6 past Millers and south on 95 towards Las Vegas we're watching gazillions of dollars being spent on construction of a massive energy pipeline.

Power, not for you or me, but for AI data centers. So much money. So much water. So much power, for what? Artificial Intelligence data centers. An entire restructuring of civilization as we know it that surpasses what happened during the industrial era.

Think about AI and then think about what Jesus just claimed here in this verse. AI is . . . I don't know what to write. But it isn't truth. It's like the sucker branches that sprout at the bottom of my trees. It looks real, but what it's doing is making me question constantly, is what my eyes think they are seeing, real, or generated.

A guy gets hit by a pickup truck in his 1911 Model T and fly's out of the vehicle and dies. I've seen about 4 different pictures of that event so far. Which picture was actually real? Some of the pictures have a black car. Some have a red car. Are any of those images real?

We used to believe what our eyes see. Pictures were evidence in courtrooms. Now what? Nothing you thought you saw was real. Where is *that* going??

Listen to what Jesus said when He was delivered up to Pilate in John chapter 18; vs. 37b *Jesus answered. “For this reason I was born and have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.”* 38 “*What is truth?*” (Pilate answered)

Jesus claims to be both the source and the picture, the witness that unveils to us truth. True truth. Pilate asks Him, are you a king, and Jesus says, yes, but not of this realm. A King sent from God to show us truth. And Pilate says, nonsense. Truth is relative and truth is unreachable, unknowable. What is truth? He was well schooled in greek philosophy. Truth is a phantom idea that cannot be grasped. The world says there is no such thing as absolute truth.

Jesus IS the truth. He says I AM the truth. He is the living speaking image and person of the truth of God. He tells Philip, If you have seen Me, you've seen the Father.

I just got an email from the Master's Theological Seminary. I copied the title of the email. It says; **We Believe in the Inerrancy of Scripture.**

In the midst of all of the AI confusion which is on the threshold of overwhelming humanity, we have a single truth source. A book that is God breathed. A book in which every plenary word is truth. A book from the author of all truth. God IS truth. Jesus IS true.

That means you need to compare every idea, every truth claim to what this book says to find out if it is true or false. This book is the standard. The final test. Things that agree with this book are true. Things that are counter to what this book says are false. You don't need a data center. You need to know what this book says. Christians need to get busy. We have a truth source.

7“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

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:

Holy God, source of all truth, and sovereign over salvation. In John 14:6 Jesus makes that same exclusive claim. *6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, literally, the door, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father,*

but through Me.

Jesus is the standard of absolute truth. All other claims are compared to Him. We have a bureau of standards. Standard measures. Jesus is the sole standard of truth. God's truth. Everything else lives or dies according to that standard. He IS the truth. He is altogether holy. He is altogether true. And He holds the keys to a glorious future together with God. He is the portal to communion with God. He is the door. He has the keys to life.

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:

What is the key of David? I'm glad you asked.

David is a type. He was the ruler of Israel, chosen by God to be their king, and to whom promises of a future king, in his bloodline, who would reign forever and ever, were given.

Jesus is that King of kings. And Jesus will return to this planet, this world, and He will depose and lock up Satan for a millenium, a thousand year reign, in Jerusalem, on David's throne.

The key of David is the messianic Kingdom, the authority of God to reign, as opposed to Satan who usurped this planet and reigned because of sin. Satan reigns now because sin reigns. But Jesus has the title deed and the keys of David. He is coming to purge sin, and Satan, and reign here in righteousness. A literal reign for a thousand years in time and space, on this planet, at Jerusalem.

It's almost as if God is showing His glory by a comparison of 6 milleniums of the reign of sin and terror by Satan to one millenium of Jesus on this world's throne of glory and perfect righteousness and joy. Like a return to the original edenic perfection and design by God.

Jesus has the key to this world and it's kingdoms. We'll see that played out

in chapter 4 and especially chapter 5. Why does he mention David to express this reality? Remember that His hearers are Old testament people of the book. When He speaks of David they immediately connect all of the old testament dots of promise. Anointed One, Messiah, Redeemer, Ruler.

It's because throughout the old testament there is a promise of a messianic deliverer, all the way back to Genesis 3, we later learn that *that* deliverer will come through the lineage of David. David's Son will have an everlasting kingdom.

Jesus shut the mouths of the pharisees once and for all as they plotted to kill Him with a question about David; Matthew 22:

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." 43 He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying,

*44 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,
"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I PUT THINE ENEMIES BENEATH THY FEET"'*?

45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

The pharisee's understood that Messiah was David's son. But they failed to understand that Messiah was God. The blind man seeking to be healed in all three gospel accounts cries out; Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

The demons cry out in Luke 4:34; *"Leave us alone! What have You to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"*

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David,

Only a single person in history can make all of those claims.

Clear back in Genesis 49, when Jacob is dying, he prophecies of his son Judah; *10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and the allegiance of the nations is his.*

Shiloh is messiah, christ, Son of David, Son of God, who will rule the nations. The key of David is His.

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:

Jesus is Holy God. Jesus is ultimate truth. Jesus has all authority to open and shut all created things. That's who this letter is from. That might be encouraging to know if you're a tiny church with tiny powers in a hostile environment.

8 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.

You might fool the neighborhood with a big lighted marque sign out front, but Jesus knows. He knows our deeds. He knows every motive, every thought. He knows their love for Him.

Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut,

In 1915, R. A. Torrey, whose accumulated knowledge of scripture was enclosed in a book that is one of 3 foundational study guides that I began with and will perhaps end with after AI takes over everything, he published a compilation of Biblical cross references called The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.

In 1915 R.A Torrey was called to pastor a bible church in Los Angeles.

And he said he would only come if the church also incorporated a Bible Institute. And so at 550 Hope St. Los Angeles they built a 4000 seat auditorium with two towers on either side that housed the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. BIOLA college. And on top of the 13 story towers were two huge neon signs installed in 1923 that lit up the words, JESUS SAVES. And behind the signs were two enormous radio towers. It was the tallest building in Los Angeles at that time.

Have you ever stopped and listened to a very distinctive preacher named J. Vernon McGee who would take you through the Bible in a 5 year teaching cycle. The broadcasts are still popular today. J Vernon McGee preached at the Church of the Open Door in downtown LA on Hope street from 1949 to 1970. And those men named that church that name because of this passage of scripture here in Revelation 3:8

They understood all of these promises and knew they were at the tail end of this prophetic era of a missionary movement that was wide open. The man who started Union Oil Co. was a christian, and he literally spent his fortune trying to preserve this philadelphian era of the church which he correctly saw slipping away. It's an interesting saga.

And it's almost cryptic that as Los Angeles changed during the riots of the '60's and the free love '70's that the church failed, in spite of it's name. And more cryptic that the big old beautiful empty building was condemned in 1986 after an earthquake rendered it unsafe for habitation. Just like the earthquakes in Philadelphia. In 1991 it was razed and replaced with a 10 story office building. Only a memory in pictures now. It's kind of symbolic to where we are in this time line of church history.

Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut,

Jesus still has the keys and He still opens doors for faithful churches. Right up until the day that the church is called home, He will be opening doors of opportunity.

Indeed, it's telling that this language of opening and closing is so real. When I first came here and taught a little study group on Sunday evenings over in the fellowship hall, it was those exact words that I told the Lord one evening. If you open a door to pastor and teach, I'll go through. And it was only months later that Dennis and Maxine retired to Mississippi (I think?) and here I am. That idea of doors of opportunity is still present. Still real.

Paul tells the corinthians in chapter 16 of his first letter and chapter 12 of his second letter this very idea.

*For a great **door** and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.* 1 Corinthians 16:9

*Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a **door** was opened unto me of the Lord,* 2 Corinthians 2:12

Jesus opens doors that cannot be shut by the world, and He shuts doors according to His sovereign will. That church on Hope street shined brightly for 55 years and now all you can do is look at old photographs of it.

8 '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.

Here are 3 reasons why Jesus gave them an open door of opportunity that affected the whole earth.

We may be in the Laodicean prophetic era of the church in 2026 but Jesus still opens doors of opportunity to faithful churches. We aren't predominant now. But churches that understand and apply the three things Jesus mentions here as the cause of open door opportunity are still viable to any church. Even in 2026.

- *because you have a little power,*

- *and have kept My word,*
- *and have not denied My name*

The first is very encouraging to folks in Tonopah. We have much in common with this little church in Philadelphia. They were small. They were insignificant. They had little power on a measurement of the world. To the world they were almost nothing.

But Jesus revels in taking little faithful groups with no significance, and combining His power, his dunamos, the greek word they named dynamite after. Jesus plus nothing = everything. We can be the nothing part of that equation.

Jesus can take a tiny group like ours, with no influence and insignificant power, and combine His power, and change the whole earth. To have a little power is not a liability with God, it's an asset. If Jesus uses TCC to change the whole world, who gets the credit? Not us. Him.

David was so insignificant that when Samuel was directed by God to go find Jesse because one of his sons was going to replace Saul and be anointed by God as king of Israel, Jesse didn't even call him out of the fields where he was herding sheep. It must be one of the other 7 sons. David is a non starter. We can leave him in the field.

That's how God works. He takes the small and the insignificant, and He turns the world upside down and inside out. We are worshipping the son of David this morning. So small and so insignificant that Jesse didn't bother to have him come to the meeting. 1 Sam. 16;

6 Then it came about when they entered, that he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:6

Eliab was the eldest and apparently the tallest and best looking son of Jesse. Samuel thought, this has got to be him. Look at him! God says nope. I look inside, not outside. This is very hopeful to those of us who didn't get the movie star good looks. I can't change the outward appearance. Much. But God can change the heart. There's hope for me yet.

God chooses based on heavens value system, not earths. So Philadelphia was small, insignificant, little influence, little power, but God looks upon the inside and says, I'm giving you folks an open door which no one can shut.

Second, and this is why they were so beautiful on the inside to God;

- *and have kept My word,*

I hope you folks never grow weary of me beating on this drum. This is the path to greatness. A greatness not our own. God is scanning the whole earth, looking for little tiny powerless churches . . . that do this.

Isaiah 66:1 This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me? Or where will My place of repose be? 2 Has not My hand made all these things? And so they came into being," declares the LORD. " This is the one I will esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at My word.

God isn't impressed with your building you've built or the power and influence of your organization. He created the dust that you made your great impressive to this world house from. He owns every atomic particle. He isn't impressed.

The disciples marvel at the Temple mount with all of it's grandeur, and Jesus sniffs at it and says; "not one stone will be left upon another" The grandest creations of men are like drops in a bucket to God. He isn't impressed.

What does impress God? *This is the one I will esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at My word*

Is there an echo in the room. Isn't that what Jesus just said about these folks at Philadelphia? Little tiny significance Philadelphia.

8 '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.

We can be very hopeful at TCC. We've got the insignificance in spades. And as long as the Lord gives me breath, and leaves this door open to me, we're going to be honoring and studying and keeping God's word.

Notice that word; Kept. *and have kept My word*

It's not enough to study it to death, we have to do it. Keeping means responding in repentance to this book's authority. We study it so we can DO what it says.

We've got the insignificance down. We've got that goin on. But the second item in the formula is trembling at His word, and that means obedience. It begins with knowledge. Knowing what the book says is important.

Hosea 4:6 says; *for lack of knowledge, my people are destroyed.* You can't tremble and obey what you don't know. Study of God's word is important. But knowledge that stops short of trembling and humble obedience is not what God is looking for. Know it and keep it. That describes what the folks at Philadelphia were doing.

And, finally, one more item in this trilogy that caused Jesus to place an open door before this church;

- *and have not denied My name*

Why would you deny His name. That church in Los Angeles that wanted

to honor this verse and enjoy it's namesake. The Church of the Open Door, had big neon signs on the towers that could be seen on all of the local freeways as you approached downtown Los Angeles. JESUS SAVES. They didn't deny His name. They had it blazing in the night sky in Los Angeles for everyone to see.

In our world, exclusion is taboo. We call it canceling. That's the trouble with Jesus name to our world. He is exclusive. That drives the inclusive politically correct world absolutely insane. The exclusiveness of the claims of Jesus makes them irrational. Insane. They hate Jesus because He makes claims that exclude anyone who doesn't bow their knees to Him.

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father, but through Me.***

The world will not be friendly to groups that insist that Jesus has the exclusive keys to the door that opens up a way for you to have God.

What is it about the name? Name is connected to authority to reign. Big neon signs that shout in the night sky that Jesus saves, are nice. But that stops short of what this verse means.

The name of Jesus is the authority of One person to reign, over everything. Peter in his first sermon in Acts 4:12 says; *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other **name** under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."*

There's the power and the exclusivity of the name. Paul completes the idea of a single name that all men must submit to;

*9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the **name** which is above every name, 10 that at the **name** of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The world will pressure the church to deny that name. The world hates and rebels against this name that demands obedience and worship. Most of His 3 year ministry on earth He was dodging the people who wanted to get their hands on Him and kill Him before God's appointed time.

Jesus and the disciples were on the move almost constantly. After John the baptist was killed by Herod, Jesus went north and moved from place to place pretty much continuously. The world wanted Him dead.

They were successful. Momentarily successful. He rose from the grave and ascended into heaven at the right hand of His Father. But nothing here has changed. The world is still furious and still killing His followers.

Imagine a world that worships the god of absolute personal autonomy. I'm god of me. I decide what is right and wrong. I'm in charge here. I own me.

Diametrically opposite from Jesus who claims He is God, and He owns everybody, and ultimately, every knee will some day bow down and recognize that He is King of kings. Jesus is Lord.

- *because you have a little power,*
- *and have kept My word,*
- *and have not denied My name*

This is the formula that resulted in a wide open door of opportunity to advance the name of Jesus all over the earth.

Next week we'll finish the rest of what Jesus tells these folks at Philadelphia. Some of it is very exciting and has a direct connection to us in 2026.