

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 morning is part 2 of this letter to the church at Philadelphia. And there is much exciting truth to set our minds to understand in this portion of this letter.

By way of review, last week we looked at who the author is. God the Son is the writer. Holy. True. Sovereign over every molecule and atom in the universes. Lord of every living spirit made up of ether we don't even know about yet. He controls all things. Every word He tells us is Truth. He is Holy and only one person is Holy. Jesus is God.

Then He tells them that He has opened a door of opportunity for them that no one can shut. He is sovereign over every door of opportunity, and He has swung open a wide door for them. And this is hopeful for us, 2000 years later. He tells them why He has done that.

If you like formula's, here's the formula for Jesus to open a door of opportunity.

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

We ended there last week, challenged, to be just like these folks at this little church with no worldly powers of our own, but we have the sovereign King as our source.

Let's take a look at the rest of this letter. No condemnations for them. They are imperfect just like we all are imperfect, but they walk by faith in the words of scripture, and Jesus supplies the power to turn the world upside down.

What else will He tell this favored group that has found the keys to effectual glory of their Saviour. Keys that are equally available to us today.

He gives this little group two promises that are just magnificent to comprehend. Let's look at the first promise; vs. 9

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.

Lots of old testament realities in this particular letter. We've got jews and synagogues and favor from God for those who claim to be in His particular favor.

The jews had the birthright and the scriptures. They were God's chosen people. They claimed election and choosing by God, above all other ethnicities or religions. They claimed to worship the one true God, self revealed to them alone, by Moses and their prophets and kings.

And that was true in as far as it goes. But they missed the promise. They rejected and murdered their own Messiah. God set them aside in judgement, and poured out grace upon the gentile nations.

So, then, we have two claimants for One God. The jews hated and persecuted the church. Both groups claim to be favored and blessed by the one true God.

We don't have any other historic information about this synagogue in Philadelphia, of jews, and what happened between them and this church. We can only read between the lines and surmise.

Two groups who claim the same revelation. And the jews have long history behind them. This church is an upstart that claims a direct connection to the God of the jews.

Any redeemed and completed jews who had become christians in that place would have been violently rejected and canceled by their families and brethren at this synagogue. There must have been some drama that causes Jesus to settle this issue for them.

So who is actually under the favor of God here. The jews who have long historic choosing by God? Or this little rag tag group of gentiles and a few jews perhaps who have turned their back on the synagogue and joined with the christians.

Jesus settles that issue.

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.

Whoa! That's a little strong. That seems a little harsh to our current cultural political correctness that says everyone has a seat at the table.

That's about as exclusive verses inclusive as something can get.

When the jews rejected their Messiah, and God set them aside in judgement, and turned His favor and His further revelation of Himself upon the church, instead of the jewish nation, what happened to the religion that carried on, after God left the room?

They were already the synagogue of Satan, the temple of Satan, when Jesus walked the earth, and they murdered Him. He tells them exactly that in John chapter 8.

43 “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. 45 “But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 “Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 “He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” John 8:43-47

The jews, who belong to Satan, sought to murder Jesus. Why? Because their father is a murderer and a liar. He tells them you are OF your father, the devil.

Jews, religious folk, that have rejected Jesus, the Messiah, are a synagogue of Satan. They think they are the chosen people, but their religion is Satanic.

This truth goes beyond the religion of the jews. Any religious group that operates outside of the once for all time delivered to the saints faith alone in Christ alone saved by His grace alone, according to the scriptures alone, for the glory of God, alone, falls in this same category.

All false religion is satanic. And sooner or later all false religions react to

the exclusionary claims of true christianity with rejection at best, and persecution at worst.

These jews at this synagogue at Philadelphia are hissing at and rejecting these christians. Canceling them. Perhaps persecuting them. Telling them they are outside the umbrella of Gods grace. Anathemizing them. Ostracizing them. In our vernacular, canceling them.

And Jesus comes along and says, things aren't as they seem. They may reject you, but I have loved you. They may be telling you that they are the blessed and chosen, but I'm telling you, they belong to Satan and you are the blessed and chosen people.

Jesus adopts us and makes us brothers. In Him I am a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have been adopted into the lineage of Israel. I have been grafted into that tree. Thus I am a true jew, and the jews who reject Jesus are sons of Satan. Paul tells us that in Romans 9 - 11.

True christianity is very exclusive. We are called out of Satan's kingdom and into the kingdom of God. We are adopted brothers of Jesus. All other religions are synagogues of Satan. Jesus loves those who belong to Him. Alone.

That's an encouraging truth in a religious world that is hostile to the claims of Christ. Some day everything that's upside down and hidden in this world of satanic worshippers, will be righted. These jews that hated the true jews who are the christians, will some day bow down before them. We wait, unmoved, for that day when Jesus will come and reign here, and right all wrongs.

In our time, a similar phenomenon is on the horizon. We can expect false religious groups who claim to be christians to persecute true christians who hold onto the authority of this book. There has been a politician in Texas this week, in the news, claiming he is a devoted christian, but saying bizarrely heretical things. A true wold claiming to be a sweet little sheep.

Beware christians. Beware true church.

*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.*

This is now the second reference to the reality of this groups treasuring and guarding and obeying God's revelation. His Word.

These are Bible people who guard the treasure. That's the sense of the word kept. They consider God's revelation, His word, to be more valuable than anything else in this world, and they have honored it by obeying it.

Bible people fight to maintain this book in it's purity. Jude, so often quoted, begins his letter with this charge;

*3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

We fight for the keeping, the guarding of the once for all time, delivered to the saints, faith. **Contend** means fight. We fight to guard the integrity and purity of the book.

Satan is continually and relentlessly working to undermine this book. There is a constant barrage against it. False christians says; It's not inspired. God didn't write it. It's full of errors. It was written by goat herds who conflicted it with all of their personal prejudices. It's up to us to decide what is worthy and beneficial, if anything, in this non inspired old book of nonsense. We reign over the book.

Or, we contend, the book is plenarily inspired by God. Every word is there by the inspiration of God who moved mens pens to write His revealed word to us. Every word is God breathed, and the book reigns over us. Whether you like what it says or not, this is God's inspired revelation given to sinful

man, in authority and judgement.

Paul tells Timothy; *O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, turning aside from godless and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge—* 1 Tim. 6:20

God's revelation, His logos, His word is a treasure. Psalm 19 is our motto.

*7 The Law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the LORD are right,
bringing joy to the heart;
the commandments of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
9 The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the judgments of the LORD are true,
being altogether righteous.
10 They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.
11 By them indeed Your servant is warned;
in keeping them is great reward.* Psalm 19:7-11

The most precious treasure we possess is revelation to us from God. Things beyond finding out, except He graciously reveals them to us. This fallen world is passing away, but God's book, His revelation, endures forever.

We fight against all of Satan's schemes to discount and change and discard these truths in this book. We guard the treasure. We obey it's commands.

We live in a culture that in my lifetime of 70+ years has completely abandoned this book. We sit around the campfire at night and our discussion turns to what will the future be for a generation of young people who have abandoned every word of God. Wholesale abandonment. We divorced God and now we want a restraining order to keep God at a distance.

We're seeing the firstfruits. No work, no marriage, no families, no children, no laws, no restraints. Those double yellow lines on the highway have no authority over me.

Civilization is a fragile flower. It came from this book, and it is vanishing along with the same book. Throw out the book and the God of the book, and everything else that preserves human flourishing goes with it. I need a dash cam.

Jesus gives these folks a promise based in their treasure of and obedience to His word.

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.

There is language here that limits what He is speaking of to the whole world. A test, a judgement, a time of judgement that will test every inhabitant on the planet. That's exactly what those words mean.

That level of testing has only happened one other time. Noah. The ark of safety, and the flood that killed every other living person. Jesus uses that analogy two times. Once in Matthew's gospel and once in Luke's.

In Luke 17, Jesus speaks of His second coming and this very time of testing.

26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the

Son of Man: 27 People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 It was the same in the days of Lot: People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But on the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

One of those is local. Sodom and gomorrah were local events, but perhaps a type of what is coming. The flood of Noah on the other hand is world wide.

In both cases the people in those places are unaware until the moment of destruction. God sealed the door on the ark, and the flood came. God allowed Lot and his wife and family to exit Sodom and Gomorrah, and fire and brimstone came from heaven.

Those are sobering framework for what Jesus tells this little trembling church in Philadelphia. I'm going to bring testing of judgement on the whole world. This book we're studying is going to be very descriptive of the hour of testing that Jesus speaks of here.

But, He tells them, like Noah and 7 others who entered the safety of the ark, and like Lot's family that exited Sodom and Gomorrah in time, I'm going to keep you from that hour.

Now then, let me help you understand what this promise means. Prophetically, the Philadelphian era of the missionary church of the open door taking the gospel to the nations is largely past. We live in the Laodicean era of the church. Lukewarmness that makes you want to vomit.

But there will be Philadelphia type churches all the way to the rapture. I believe, and I've laid good groundwork for you, that this speaks of a pre-tribulation rapture of the true church. Worldwide.

The church age ends abruptly. Like the flood or the fire on Sodom. Abrupt end of the church. And I believe that happens at the rapture. Jesus comes and calls His true church physically out of this world. *Come Up Here.* Rev. 4:1

We philadelphia type christians who hold on tightly to the treasure, are waiting to hear those 3 words. *Come Up Here.* Rev. 4:1 And as the line in the song says that we no longer sing;

This robe of flesh, I'll drop, and rise to seize the everlasting prize, and shout while passing through the air, Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.

Jesus is going to keep His own, who belong to Him, from the hour of testing of the whole world, which is the tribulation period of 7 years.

The church age ends abruptly at the rapture because that hour of testing that comes upon the entire population of the earth is called the time of Jacob's trouble. Jacob's distress. It is the final 7 years of jewish history still waiting on God's clock. Daniel's 70th week of years. The church is never seen again after we finish Revelation chapter 3.

God saves His own from this time of distress just like Noah and his family rode safely in the ark.

10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance

The idea of perseverance in guarding and keeping and whatever suffering is involved in honoring the treasure of the book, before the tribulation is telling.

We're all sitting around the campfire, cowboy TV, and AI is a big topic these days. Power and water for AI is already pre-empting humans in some cases. Sorry folks, in the descending logic of priorities, the AI gets the water and the power it needs first, and humans get the leftovers.

What will christians be called to persevere, before the rapture calls us out, and home. We don't know. But in this verse there is a sense that perseverance over the integrity of holding onto God's word is something we should perhaps think about now, and not later.

What will you give up in order to keep Christ? Is the next verse a cryptic caution for weak christians? Christians who have lived in a country where it cost exactly nothing to call yourself a christian?

11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.

I am coming quickly. The rapture of the church will come at an hour with no warning except for these general exhortations to stay alert and ready at all times.

We are exhorted, as believers, to live every day, every hour, expectant. Fill your flask with extra oil. We will get weary and doze off while we wait for the call that the bridegroom is arriving.

Jesus never says; I'm coming on Friday between 6 and 7 in your time zone. Pack up your stuff and go to the rooftop. He says I am coming quickly; I'll be taking those who are ready, is the inference.

Then the scary part for lazy christians. Like me. *hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.*

I believe we may see the beginnings of a delusion that is so strong, Jesus Himself says; 24 *"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.* 25 *"Behold, I have told you in advance.* Matt. 24:24,25

Paul tells us; *The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the working of Satan, with every kind of power, sign, and false wonder, / and*

with every wicked deception directed against those who are perishing, because they refused the love of the truth that would have saved them.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

Did Jesus tell the philadelphia type christians that are going to be alive at the rapture to hold on to what you have, because the deluding influence would already be testing true believers before the rapture?

That idea fits very well with everything else that we've been exhorted and warned about in this letter. Makes perfect sense.

11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.

This delusion that is coming has been getting it's way greased ahead of time by the Pentecostal and charismatic movements with all the so-called miracles.

Miracles ended at the end of the apostolic era of the first century church and then reappeared in 1900? Really. Miracles are why people will fall for the anti-christ. After the last miracle recorded in the book of Acts, the next miracles we see in the biblical text will be the anti-christ's delusion.

The charismatic movement is paving the way for the anti-christ. That sounds pretty harsh, but put your thinking caps on, people.

Everything about whatever this delusion is leads me to believe that it's going to be so strong, that rock solid Holy Spirit indwelt regenerated saved people are going to have a hard time holding onto the truth for dear life.

The rest of luke warm christianity is going to get swept away in it. We'll see that next week in Laodicea. Antichrist is going to suck up lukewarm christians like a vacuum cleaner. It can't be wrong if it feels so right. Miracles! he does miracles.

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.'

Who is it that overcomes. John tells us succinctly who those are in his first epistle. 1 John 5:5 *And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Every real true christian who has been called out of this world and into the kingdom of God, is an overcomer.

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

This may have had very special meaning to those first hearers in Philadelphia that is sort of lost to us. In this world, pillars are temporary. Earthquakes tend to knock them down. That sends those folks inside, running out for safety.

In heaven, where every single overcomer is going, the temple is not only permanent, God is going to make you a pillar in His temple.

There's also the possibility that some of these christians were formerly jews and were excommunicated from the temple in Jerusalem. Cast out. This promise of heaven is saying there will be no more going out from God's temple. The jews may have excommunicated you but God will make you a pillar in His temple forever. That's as true for us now as it was to the first hearers.

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.

This may be a dumb illustration but; Miss Pam has made up dog tags for our two dogs. They have the doggies name; Hobbs; and it has information about who owns Hobbs and where he belongs.

In heaven I'm going to have God's name written on me, and the place I belong, the city of God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven will be written on me, and Jesus new name will be written on me.

Talk about an identity. This is already who I am. I've got the downpayment, the indwelling Holy Spirit, living inside me that is the guarantee that all of this identity will eventually be written on me.

Perhaps the best way to get our heads around these magnificent promises of a future our minds aren't really even equipped to comprehend, that we tend to glaze over, is to revisit what Jesus said to the churches that weren't measuring up. A quick review; This is what you don't want to hear if He writes you a letter!

Ephesus; 2:5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first. But if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

Pergammum; 16 Therefore repent. But if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

Thyatira; 22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

Sardis; 3:2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of My God.

3 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.

Laodicea; 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked,

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be manifested; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Does that give you some motivation to be a Philadelphia type christian in a Philadelphia type church? What a difference in tone. I'm going to pour out blessings on you forever that you can't even fathom. OR I'm going to come and wipe you off the face of the map.

13 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Don't be like the guy in James that looks in the mirror and walks away and does nothing about what he saw in the reflection.

We need to pay careful attention to hear and understand and repent if needed and faithfully obey all that this book tells us.

Let's reaffirm our commitment to be like this church at Philadelphia. Faithful to Jesus. Committed to understand and obey this book in all that we do. Strong missionary outreach, both local and worldwide. Perhaps He will join with our insignificant power and do something mighty with us.