

REVELATION

The Triumph of Jesus

The founders of Philadelphia intended it to be a center of Greek culture and language. Therefore, it was to be a missionary outpost for spreading Hellenism to the regions of Lydia and Phrygia. Philadelphia succeeded in its mission so well that by A.D. 19 the Lydian language had been completely replaced by Greek.¹

Love is such an important trait in the life of a church and in the lives of believers who make up the church. However, it is not enough to love God and our fellow believers; we must also love a lost world and seek to reach unbelievers with the gospel. This church had a vision to reach lost, unsaved people. Jesus set before them an open door.

Revelation 3:7... “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...”

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write"... This one is unique and seems to have some Old Testament features.

"He who is holy"... The Lord Jesus always introduces Himself by describing His character. This is the first description among the correspondence to the churches so far that is not drawn from the initial vision found in Revelation 1:12-17.

The Old Testament describes God as holy over and over again. This word “*holy*” describes God’s flawless nature. “Holy One” is used as a messianic title for Jesus in the New Testament (Mark 1:24).

Peter’s declaration...

John 6:69... “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

John testified...

1 John 3:5... You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 120.

This is a direct claim to deity! Because Jesus is holy, every word He ever spoke and everything He ever did was perfect.

Isaiah 6:3... And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

“Who is true”... This speaks of One who is *true, dependable, genuine, authentic*. Truth in combination with holiness is used repeatedly in Revelation to describe God. G. Campbell Morgan distinguished between holiness and truth. He said that as the “Holy One”, Jesus Christ is right in character. As the “True One”, Jesus Christ is right in conduct.

1 John 5:20... And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Revelation 15:3... And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

In the midst of the falsehood, perversion, and error that fills the world, the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6).²

“Who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this”...It is important to understand that a “key” symbolizes authority. Whoever has the key has control. “David” of course refers to King David and Jesus is called the Son of David. The significance of the “*key of David*” is that it speaks of the rule of David’s throne.

Isaiah 9:6–7... For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Luke 1:32–33... “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

He and He alone has ultimate power to open the door to His kingdom with its blessings and He has the ultimate authority to close the door to His kingdom. ***NO ONE CAN FORCE THEIR WAY***

² John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 119.

IN AND NO ONE CAN SHUT THE DOOR THAT JESUS HOLDS OPEN! This description stresses Christ's omnipotence; what He does cannot be overturned by someone more powerful because no one is more powerful than Him.³ Jesus has sovereign control over His church. He has sovereign control over salvation. Could it be that the world is getting its last chance to be saved?

Revelation 3:8... '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.'

"I know your deeds"...Here again we must come to grips with the infallible knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Behold, I have put before you an open door which no can shut"...This is a perfect tense verb, meaning that *the door He opened remains open today*. The picture of the Lord Jesus opening the door reveals the security of their salvation and an open door for service. As a "gateway city" the believers at Philadelphia had an excellent opportunity to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

The Pax Romana was in place—this was an era of peace in the world and it was enforced by the powerful Roman army.

The Greek language was used universally. So, wherever believers went to preach the gospel in the Roman world, they could be understood.

The Roman road system was already functioning. Apostles, pastors, evangelists used these roads to take the gospel throughout the world of that day.

This was the time to seize the opportunity to preach the gospel. Hey, what about our day? We have at our disposal the internet, social media, jet travel, etc. We have unprecedented opportunities to get the gospel to our generation (Kingdom 50). When our Lord opens a door, we must go through it!

John 10:9... "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

Speaking of "open doors" consider the following references...

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 119.

Acts 14:27... When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 16:8–9... But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; **9** for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Colossians 4:2–3... Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; **3** 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

1. “Because you have a little power”... Finding nothing in their *deeds* that caused Him concern, the Lord Jesus moved on to commend the Christians at Philadelphia for four realities that characterized the congregation.⁴

Though this church was small in number, it possessed amazing spiritual power. Numbers do not translate into spiritual power. Spiritual power depends on character and commitment (Examples: Elijah, Gideon, 12 disciples, 120 believers at Pentecost).

2. “And have kept My word”...These Christians received the Word and they believed the Word. God’s Word was holy to them. They were marked by their obedience! We must always keep in mind the stress our Lord places upon His Word and obeying His Word.

Matthew 7:21–23... “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. **22** “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ **23** “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

They did not deviate from the pattern of obedience, thus proving the genuineness of their love for Christ (John 14:23–24; 15:13–14).⁵

3. “And have not denied My name”...What courageous believers these were. Open doors always result in opposition! Facing the mounting pressure of pagan idolatry, they did not budge in their faith and their loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Revelation 14:12 describes the Tribulation saints who refused to take the mark of the beast: “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 121.

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 122.

Jesus.” Like them, the Philadelphia church would not recant its faith.⁶ Look at verse 10 for the fourth reality for which Jesus commended them.

We live in a day when the name of Jesus is mocked and is used in blasphemous ways. We must never forget that it is only through His name that people can be saved.

Acts 4:12... “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.”

Matthew 10:22... “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”

Revelation 3:9... ‘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.’

“Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but lie”...There were enemies of Jesus Christ and the gospel there in Philadelphia. They were Jews who called themselves the people of God, but they were imposters and liars! Because of their rejection of Jesus Christ, they were not a synagogue of God. They were a synagogue of Satan! Here’s a biblical definition of a true Jew...

Romans 2:28–29... For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

“Behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you”... A day of judgment is coming upon this world. On that day, these Christ rejecters will bow down before the believers of Philadelphia and acknowledge that Jesus Christ loved them. The Philadelphia church’s faithfulness would be rewarded by the salvation of some of the very Jews who were persecuting it.⁷

Revelation 3:10... ‘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 on the earth.’

⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 122.

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 123.

4. “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance”...They had endured faithfully all that had been thrown at them. Both Christ’s command and example should motivate Christians to patient endurance. Indeed, endurance is an essential aspect of saving faith (Matt. 10:22).⁸

“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”... G. Campbell Morgan wrote...

“While that promise may had its partial fulfillment in the escape of the church at Philadelphia from some wave of persecution that swept over the district, its final fulfillment will undoubtedly be realized by those who, loyal to His word, and not denying His name, shall be gathered out of the world at His Second Coming before the judgment that must usher in the setting up of His kingdom upon the earth.”

There are three views related to the timing of the rapture in relation to the seven years of tribulation.

- **Post-Tribulation** refers to the rapture occurring at the end of the tribulation.
- **Mid-Tribulation** refers to the rapture occurring in the middle of the tribulation.
- **Pre-Tribulation** refers to the rapture occurring before the tribulation begins.

The Rapture is the subject of three passages in the New Testament (John 14:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:13–17), none of which speak of judgment, but rather of the church being taken up to heaven.⁹

The *“hour of testing”* is Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 9:25-27). It is Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7). God is about to pour out His wrath upon those who have scorned His name and rejected His Son. The Bible refers to this as a period of great tribulation. Listen to John’s words...

Revelation 6:17... “for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

I personally believe that the church will be saved from this hour of tribulation. The word says...

1 Thessalonians 1:9–10... For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is Jesus*, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

⁸ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 122.

⁹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Revelation 1–11](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 124.

1 Thessalonians 5:9–10... For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

Listen carefully to these final words of Jesus...

Revelation 3:11... 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.'

"I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have"... This is the third time in these opening chapters of Revelation that Jesus said that He is coming again (**1:7; 2:25; 3:11**). What did they have to hold on to? They had spiritual power. They had His Word. They had assurance of salvation. They had His name. They had the promise of His coming. To these they were to hold fast!

"In order that no one take your crown"... Jesus is not referring to salvation being taken from us here. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. Period. End of question. Listen, Ephesians 2:10 says that we are saved to serve the Lord Jesus. For our service we will be rewarded. Frequently the Bible depicts Jesus' coming as a time when He rewards His followers.

Revelation 22:12... "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

How can a believer's crown be stolen? We may lose our crowns through discouragement, worldliness, compromise, sin, the wrong friends, laziness, lukewarmness, etc.

Revelation 3:12... '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 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.'

As He concluded the letter to the faithful church at Philadelphia, Christ promised four eternal blessings to the overcomer.

[1.] I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God and He will not go out from it anymore...The Lord Jesus promises four eternal blessings to those who overcome. "Pillar" speaks of stability and strength and permanence. These believers who had to flee their city because of the constant tremors associated with earthquakes would dwell in complete security and, in fact, they would be honored in the temple of God!

[2.] “And I will write upon him the name of My God”...This pictures ownership. We belong to God now and forevermore!

[3.] “And the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God”...This speaks of the believer’s eternal citizenship, safety, and glory!

[4.] “And My new name”...The name of Jesus represents the fullness of His person. We will see Him as He is, and, because of that new revelation, we will be privileged to know just how glorious and wonderful He is!

Revelation 3:13... ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”...Listen church. The Spirit of God is speaking to us through these divine words!