

## Revelation 3:7-13

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### What are some things we know about Philadelphia?

- **One of the ten cities of the “Decapolis”:** Group of cities that were centers of Greek and Roman culture on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire in Jordan, Palestine, and Syria that shared the same language, culture, location, and political status.
- **An important center for trade:** It was located 28 miles southeast from Sardis on the Cogamus River one of the empire’s greatest trade routes leading from Europe to the east.
- **Successful in grape growing:** It stood upon a terrace 650 feet above the sea. Behind it was volcanic cliffs and on the other side of the city the land was exceedingly fertile.
- **Worshiped Dionysus (“god of the vine”):** Famous for their fine wines, this gave rise to the worship of Dionysus, the primary pagan religion of the city.
- **Named after King Attalus II Philadelphus** founder of city (ruled from 159 to 138 B.C.).
  - Ecumenes II was such a great admirer of his brother who had ruled before him, that he named the city **Philadelphia**, meaning “**brother lover.**”
- **Earthquakes were common:** Located in a region where earthquakes were frequent.
  - A very powerful earthquake destroyed the city in A.D. 17 (along with 11 other Asian cities including Sardis).
  - Like Sardis, the city was rebuilt with the help from Tiberius Caesar.
  - Earthquake tremors caused many to live in fear and live on the outskirts of town.
- **Known for a time as Neocaesarea** (New Caesar) during 1<sup>st</sup> century out of gratitude for Tiberius’ help in rebuilding the city. Name appears on coins during that time.
- **Briefly known as Flavia** during the reign of Titus Flavius Vespasianus.
- **“Little Athens”:** It bore this title because of the magnificence of the temples to the pagan deities and other public buildings which adorned it

### Verse 7:

#### *“He who is holy”*

- It is very significant that Jesus would identify Himself with the holiness of God!
- As the divine Son of God, Christ is “holy” (**Acts 3:14**); as the Son of Man, he is “holy” as one who lived in the flesh pure and undefiled (**Heb. 7:26**).

#### *“He that is true”*

- True, sincere, dependable, genuine, and real.
- The genuine Messiah that fulfilled God’s promises and prophecies concerning Christ.
- He is true because He genuinely offers the confident assurance of eternal life (**1 Jn 5:20**)

### ***"He who has the key of David"***

- This identifies Christ with the rule and throne promised to David's seed.
- It does not say "He that one day will have the key of David." Christ now already has it!
- Key is a symbol of power and authority. Jesus has supreme power and rule!

### **Compare to Isaiah 22:21-22**

- The key of the house of David was laid upon the shoulder of Eliakim (ee-LAI-uh-kihm), the son of Hilkiah (hihl-KAI-uh) who succeeded Shebna as a high official in the court of Hezekiah "in charge of the royal household." (**Isa. 22:15**).
- He alone had power to open and shut the royal court, this being symbolic of his authority as the king's representative.
- Eliakim was a pre-figure of Christ. To Christ the key belongs by right! (**Isa. 9:6-7**)

### **1. How would Jesus' power to open and shut be a rebuke towards the Jews who declared the terms for salvation? (cf. Mat. 23:13 / John 14:6)**

- The Jews would exclude from any hope of Messianic blessing, the hated Gentiles.
- The Jews may have restricted access to the synagogue and to the fold of God, yet Jesus is the true One who opens the way into Heaven and shuts it towards those who are not His.
- Jesus opens and closes the blessings of the kingdom to whoever He chooses and the Jews have no say on the matter (no matter how much they slandered, mocked, or ridiculed).

### **Verse 8:**

**Note: The church at Philadelphia stands with Smyrna as having no condemnation charged against it.**

### **1. What does the "open door" that Jesus sets before them (that no one can shut) represent? (Jn 10:9, 16; 14:6; See also Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3).**

- Most likely represents an entrance that leads to eternal blessings found only through Christ (**John 14:6**) for both Jew and Gentile (**Rom. 1:16; Gal. 3:28; John 10:9, 16**).
- "Door" often refers to a great opportunity through which a goal could be attained (e.g. **Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3**). - A special opportunity and challenge given to the church; e.g. the opportunity to spread the gospel.

### **2. What three reasons did Jesus give for why there is an open door before them?**

(1) They have a little strength (2) They have kept My word (3) They have not denied My name.

### **3. What does Christ mean when He says "you have a little strength (or power)"?**

Some say maybe they were few in number or that their economic and social status and influence was "little." Instead, this "little power" stands for their obedience and their refusal to deny His name. Though they were of small account in human eyes, they were great in God's eyes.

### **4. How does this compliment go to show that "little" churches can have an influence for Christ? (cf. Mat. 5:16; 25:14-30)**

The Lord can use whatever we have and multiply our effectiveness for the cause of Christ.

When we do what the Lord has commanded, God will cause the increase and bless us richly.

Having only "little" or one talent (**Mat. 25:14-30**) does not excuse us to not use what we have.

### **Verse 9:**

**Note: The description of some Jews as a “synagogue of Satan” is the same given in 2:9 in the letter to the church at Smyrna.**

#### **1. How is it true that these Jews lie when they say they are Jews? (cf. Rom. 2:28-29).**

These Jews are Jews only in the flesh, but they are not the true “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3). They did not have spiritual superiority as they claimed.

#### **2. How will it be that these Jews will worship before the feet of the saints? (cf. Phil. 2:10-11; Isa. 60:14)**

- At the final judgment they will bow their knees before Him as Lord and will acknowledge that His people are the legitimate servants of God (Phil. 2:10-11).
- If the church was comprised of many Gentiles, such a statement would have enraged the Jews greatly and humiliated them. - Worship Gentiles!?! (Isa. 60:14).

### **Verse 10:**

#### **1. Who shall be given this trial of testing? Why will Christ keep them from “the hour of trial”?**

- “The whole world” – “Those who dwell on the earth.”
- “Because you have kept My command to persevere” (“the word of My patience”).

#### **2. Does this mean that the saints will not be subjected to this trial? (cf. Rev. 7:14)**

- Perhaps they are not totally exempt from the trial. They, unlike the world, will have special protection and strength from God to be brought safely through the trial.
- The church at Philadelphia will have its own trials that will test their faith, but it will be kept safe from trials which would affect those of “the world.”

#### **3. When will this trial be given? What was this “world wide” trial about?**

- The fact that the church at Philadelphia would be involved suggests he was not speaking of the future coming of Christ.
- Neither would it be referring to the fall of Jerusalem which the advocates of the early date for Revelation teach. Historically, churches of Asia were not affected at all by the destruction of Jerusalem.
- Perhaps this refers to the rise of Domitian persecution (Those who refused to worship the emperor became enemies of the state) and the third Jewish-Roman war.

### **Verse 11:**

#### **1. What assurance does the statement “Behold, I am coming quickly!” give the people of God?**

- Christ will not delay to safeguard His people in the hour of trial.
- This is not in reference to the final coming or judgment of Christ, for the NT does not teach that the Lord was to return immediately.
- There is a sense in which Christ is continually coming to the aid of His people and judging the wicked people of this world even today.

**2. How does this verse teach the importance of an obedient faith? How does this refute the doctrine “once saved always saved” or “eternal security”?**

**Note: “Crown” represents salvation (1 Thes. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4) or “the crown of life” (2:10). (cf. Rev. 2:10).**

- We can lose our salvation (“crown”) if we do not hold fast and remain faithful. Therefore, this verse teaches that a child of God can live in such a manner as to be lost.
- If we allow others to seduce us into denying Christ and becoming unfaithful we could lose our salvation.
- It is not that the enemy can take away the crown and have it for his own, but rather that the Christian may forfeit his crown if he is not careful.

**Verse 12:**

***“I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God”***

- In ancient times when a person died who had given outstanding service, a pillar was inscribed in his honor with his name upon it in the temple of his god.
- Similarly, the faithful saint will be given a permanent and important position in the temple of the one true God (cf. **Ps. 27:4**).
- The temple is another word for church in N.T. (**1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21**).
- The temple could possibly represent the Heavenly realms above (The word temple is used 16 times in Revelation and always in reference to the heavenly temple save 11:1-2).
- Philadelphia had a history of destruction from earthquakes, yet these Christians would be pillars that could not be destroyed.
- John made the statement in **Rev 21:22** *“I saw no temple therein.”* Therefore, Heaven can be considered one eternal temple and saints who go there will stay there permanently.

***“He shall go out no more”***

- When earthquakes occurred in Philadelphia, its citizens fled in fear out of the city into the open countryside.
- In contrast, in God’s eternal temple there will be safety and security (**Rev. 7:15; 21:3-4**).

***“I will write on him the name of My God”***

- An indication that he/ she belonged to God (cf. **Exod. 28:36-38**).
- Other children of God are also sealed unto Him (**Rev. 7:2; 9:4; 14:1**).

***“I will write on him... the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem”***

- The new city of God is *in Heaven* where the new Israel will dwell.
- There is a new Zion, a new Israel with Christ as its foundation (**Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:6**). Saints are citizens of the city of God in Heaven (**Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2**).
- This new Jerusalem comes “down out of Heaven” - That ought to settle the issue as to whether it is physical or spiritual in nature.

***“I will write on him My new name”***

- This name identifies the victorious saints as sharing the glory which is Christ’s (**Col. 3:4**) and the transformation in becoming like Christ (**1 John 3:2**).
- The name would represent all that Christ is in His glory, goodness and power.
- Only Christ knows this new name according to Revelation 19:12.

**Verse 13:** *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*