

## 9. The Message to the Church at Philadelphia

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain and apply the messages that are given to the churches in the book of Revelation. In this topic, we will be looking at the message that Christ gave John to the church at Philadelphia. We will see that Christ had nothing negative to say about this church.

We see that Christ set an open door before the church of Philadelphia. Revelation 3:7-9 says, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.’” Christ chose to use several words to describe Himself to this church. Those words are directly related to the message to this church.

First, Christ described Himself as holy. The word translated “holy” means *that which is most holy or a saint*. This name is used in the New Testament most often as a description for the Holy Spirit or saints to refer to Christians. In this verse, we see that it refers to Christ. Second, Christ described Himself as true. In the book of John, Christ is called the true Light, the true bread and the true vine. Revelation 19:11 says, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.” As a result, Jesus is called True several times in the New Testament.

Christ also said that He has the key of David. This is taken from Isaiah 22:22, where we read: “The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open.” With this key Christ can open and no one can shut. Christ can shut and no one can open. Christ went on to say that He knew their works. As a result of their works, Christ said that He had set before the church at Philadelphia an open door. This statement tells us that the works of the church at Philadelphia were pleasing to the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” The church at Philadelphia was established in good works.

Three things are recognized about their works. First, you have a little strength. This church did not depend on its own strength but the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul said, in Romans 15:19, “In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” The Lord can do a lot through our lives when we depend on the power of His Spirit. Second, this church had kept (obeyed) the Word of God. James 1:22 says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” They were doers of the Word and not just hearers. They did what they taught. Third, they had not denied the name of Christ. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John,

and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” This is an example of not denying Christ.

Christ said that he would make those who were of the synagogue of Satan recognize the true followers of Christ. Revelation 2:9 says, “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan.” The Jews who had rejected Christ as the eternal Son of God were just as guilty of false worship as any other false religion under the control of Satan. Romans 9:30-31 says, “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.” Israel tried to get righteousness by their works instead of faith. In a future day, Israel will finally turn to the Lord and no longer be a synagogue of Satan. That day is described in Romans 11:26-27, which says: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

God gave a great promise to the church at Philadelphia. Revelation 3:10-11 says, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” The church at Philadelphia had been faithful to the Lord. As a result, Christ gave this church a promise about the future. Christ said that He would keep them from the hour of trial. The word translated “trial” means *temptation, testing, or trial*. James 1:2 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” James 1:12 uses the same word when it says, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Then, 1 Peter 4:12 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

However, Revelation 3:10 is different than any of these verses because it speaks about the hour of trial that will come on the whole world rather than personal trials and tests. The only time when severe trials will affect the entire world will be during the time of the tribulation. Here, Christ promised that He would keep this church from that time of world tribulation which will be described in chapters 6-19 of Revelation. In fact, Revelation 7:14 describes the second half of this period as the great tribulation. That verse says, “And I said to him, ‘“Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” These are tribulation saints and not a part of the church that will be taken to heaven at the Rapture. That tribulation will test all those who dwell on the earth.

Christ also told the church of Philadelphia that He is coming quickly. That is due to the fact that Christ promises to come and take the church to heaven at the Rapture before the tribulation. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, we read, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who

are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” The tribulation is the first event of the day of the Lord and it is mentioned beginning in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, where we read, “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”

Then, Christ told the church at Philadelphia, “Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” In Revelation 2:10, the crown of life is the reward for faithfulness. Revelation 3:12-13 goes on to say, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 *I will write on him* My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The temple of my God is the throne of God in heaven. Revelation 7:15 says, “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.” Overcomers will be in the temple of God which is the eternal presence of God.

The fact that the temple of God is in heaven is illustrated in Revelation 11:19, where we read: “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.” In addition to being a pillar in the temple of God, overcomers will also have the name of God written on them along with the name of the city of God which is the New Jerusalem. Abraham was looking for this heavenly city. Hebrew 11:10 says, “For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” Then, Hebrews 12:22-23 adds, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Instead, we see that God will make us perfect for all eternity. That is why Christ will write His new name on every overcomer. In the Old Testament, the name was often used to speak of character. This is a reminder that we will have the character of Christ throughout all eternity. 1 John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Christ concluded the message to this church by saying, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and be able to clearly explain why this church reminds us that we will be kept from “the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.” This is a tremendous promise to all true believers who are a part of the church. We do not have to fear the tribulation because we will be taken to heaven before it begins. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.