

The Church at Philadelphia

Introduction:

I. The Description of Christ:

Revelation 3:7 (ESV) “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’”

The description of Christ relevant to the vision of Christ in chapter 1.

Revelation 1:17 (ESV) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, Revelation 1:18 (ESV) and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

The risen Christ is the one, and only one, who has power over eternal life and damnation.

The risen Christ alone has power over life and death, heaven and hell.

Revelation 1:17 (ESV) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last,

Revelation 1:18 (ESV) and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

Revelation 3:7 (ESV) “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’”

II. The Assessment of the Church

A. There is no negative assessment of the church.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) “ ‘I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

1. The church at Philadelphia is the only church of the 7 that Christ has nothing negative to say concerning them.
2. In this, obviously the church at Philadelphia is quite unique.

B. The positive assessment of the church.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

1. The church at Philadelphia has been faithful to God's word.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

- a. They have prized, guarded, preserved God's word.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

- b. They have been obedient to God's word.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

2. The church at Philadelphia has remained faithful in their witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

3. The church at Philadelphia is praised for her faithfulness despite its meager resources.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name

- a. This was a church that did not possess a great deal of worldly influence.
- b. This church did not exercise a place of dignity or worldly importance.
- c. Most likely they were not large in size nor were they comprised of the leaders in the community.
- d. This should be a reminder to us of where the true power of the church is to be found.
- e. What is also important to remember is the church at Sardis did have a reputation and influence though it was spiritually dead.

Revelation 3:1 (ESV) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. " 'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

- f. So too, in our day, many of the churches that exercise the most political influence in our nation are those that in fact are spiritually dead. Think of where many of our national leaders attend worship when they do worship.

III. The promise of Christ's help for the church.

- A. They will triumph over their persecutors.

Revelation 3:9 (ESV) Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

1. They will triumph by Christ's power.

Revelation 3:9 (ESV) Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

Revelation 3:8 (ESV) " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name

- a. It will not be because of their influence upon govt.
- b. It will be by the power of God as a result of their faithfulness to the word of God.

2. They will triumph because of Christ's love for them.

Revelation 3:9 (ESV) Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

Here we are to learn that Christ's love for the church is demonstrated through the church's triumph and not the church's position or worldly resources.

- B. They will be rewarded for their faithfulness to God's word.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

- C. The nature of the reward.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

1. First it should be noted that there is an important play on words.

Since they have "kept" His word He will "keep" them.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

2. What is the hour of trial?

- a. The hour of trial is future.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

- b. The hour of trial that is referred to in this verse is universal.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

- c. The hour of trial is to bring hard testing to those dwelling on the earth.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

That is it will be a time to reveal who is approved of God and who is not.

- d. Most likely the hour of trial is the great tribulation.

This would require that we understand the “you” in Revelation 3:10 as being a generic you and not simply applying to the church at Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

3. What is the promise “I will keep you from the hour of trial?”

Revelation 3:10 (ESV) Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

Remember the play on words. Since they have “kept” His word He will “keep” them.

- a. There are two common answers that are given to that question.
 - (1) It refers to the rapture of the church prior to the tribulation period.
 - (2) It refers to the preservation of the church through the tribulation period.
- b. Which is it?
 - (1) Is it the pre-tribulational rapture of the church?
 - (a) In my estimation this is the best verse in the scripture to support a pre-tribulational rapture.
 - (b) If I were going to defend that position, this is the passage I would go to do so.
 - (2) Is it preserving the church through the tribulation?

When taking the whole context of the book of Revelation, it seems to me that the meaning must be that the promise is to persevere through the tribulation for elsewhere in the book of Revelation the “coming of Christ” does not fit into a pre-tribulational view.
 - (3) The coming of Christ and its accompanying events in the book of Revelation.
 - (a) The coming of Christ is not secretive and is witnessed by all.

Revelation 1:7 (ESV) **Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.** Even so. Amen.

- (b) The coming of Christ also brings judgment.

Revelation 2:5 (ESV) Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Revelation 2:16 (ESV) Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 3:3 (ESV) Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

- (c) The coming of Christ brings both reward and judgment.

Revelation 22:12 (ESV) “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”

- (d) The coming of Christ is seen as a culminating act not an initiatory act in Revelation.

Revelation 22:13 (ESV) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Revelation 22:14 (ESV) Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

Revelation 22:15 (ESV) Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Revelation 22:16 (ESV) "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

Revelation 22:17 (ESV) The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Revelation 22:18 (ESV) I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,

Revelation 22:19 (ESV) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Revelation 22:20 (ESV) He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

- (4) What is most important is not the method whereby God will "keep" His people but the fact that God will "keep" His people.

IV. The final exhortation:

- A. The church is to remain faithful till Christ comes.

Revelation 3:11 (ESV) I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

- B. The church will be rewarded for its faithfulness when He comes.

Revelation 3:11 (ESV) I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

- C. Those who are faithful till He comes will be given eternal life with Christ in the new heaven and the earth.

Revelation 3:12 (ESV) The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

- D. All Christians are to learn from, and apply the truths that are declared to the 7 churches.

Revelation 3:13 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

