

Revelation 3:7-13

Philadelphia

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preliminary notes for sermon not preached

Do a review of the geography (maps), the seven cities (churches), “angel” of the church, John on Patmos writing to encourage them in difficult times, Review the seven churches - bulletin insert of 7 letters.

Do you ever feel like giving up on Christianity?

No, I don't mean do you feel like going off the deep end and like some juvenile trying all the forbidden things you can think of. I mean do you ever feel like just quitting, just stopping all the effort to keep all the “balls in the air”? Quit teaching or leading or working with youth, quit giving, stop reading the Bible, cease praying, stop the discipline of getting up a little earlier just to read the Bible?

“Philadelphia” so named because one brother Attalus, a local king (200 years before this letter) was faithful to his older brother Eumenes, another local king and was thus called lover of his brother. The city took on the name.

The city was nearly destroyed by earthquakes in 17 B.C. and so many buildings are less than 100 years old by John's day.

3:7

“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

“These are the words of him who is holy and true

“who holds the key of David.

“What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.”

HOLY - familiar title for God also meaning “set apart” for a particular work.

TRUE - genuine and faithful - Christ can be counted on because he is the real thing and he will follow through with what he promises.

And the next phrases speak of his authority:

As with Eliakim, so with Christ, he has full authority in the kingdom.

Isa 22:20 "In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah.

21 I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Christ is the Davidic Messiah who has full authority to include and exclude from the Kingdom of God.

(maybe in contrast to the local synagogue rulers who were excluding Christian Jews and were themselves false pretenders to the authority of David's house)

So here Jesus is HOLY, TRUE, and AUTHORITATIVE
Set apart to do his work, faithful to do it, powerful and with the authority to carry it out.

3:8

"I know your deeds.

"See I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

"I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

As in the preceding verse so here the "open door that no one can shut" seems to refer to Christ's authority to include them in his kingdom even if the local authorities have shut them out.

Jesus is encouraging them. The "door" is the entrance to his kingdom which he has opened for them (salvation) and no one can shut it or exclude them from belonging to the true kingdom.

"little strength" - they were not imposing as a Christian congregation, maybe small in number, not much apparent impact on the culture, maybe feeling very vulnerable.

AFFIRMATION: In spite of your lack of strength you have remained faithful.

"Kept my word"

John 8:51 "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

"not denied my name"

Matt 10:32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

3:9

"I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars - I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

3:10

"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

3:11

"I am coming soon.

"Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

1:7 "Look he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.."

2:10 "crown of life"

1 Peter 5:4 "And When the chief shepherd appears you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

James 1:12 "blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

2Tim 4:8 "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

Isa 62:2 "you will be called by a new name"

Isa 62:3 "You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand..."

3:12

"Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God.

"Never again will he leave it.

"I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

21:10 "the Holy City, Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God"

22:4 "his name will be on their foreheads"

3:13

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