

Hurstbourne Baptist Church; October 25, 2020
Sermon Notes: Revelation 3:7-13
“To the Church in Philadelphia”

Introduction

The Church in Philadelphia received no complaint or criticism from Jesus. Rather, Jesus gave the Christians in Philadelphia great promises to help them persevere in faithfulness. In the sermon today, we will look at three great promises Jesus made to the Philadelphian Christians. Then, we will explore this question: Why did Jesus make such wonderful promises to the Philadelphian Christians?

Sermon Outline

- Three Promises to Philadelphia
- One Study Question
- One Application Question

Three Promises to Philadelphia

- **Promise #1:** “I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut” (3:8).
- **Promise #2:** “I am going to make your enemies bow down at your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you” (3:9).
- **Promise #3:** “I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth” (3:10).

One Study Question

- Why did Jesus promise to bless Philadelphia?
 - “You have kept my word and have not denied my name” (3:8).
 - “Because you have kept my word about patient endurance...” (3:10).

One Application Question

- Why does God allow Christians to suffer hardship? As you meditate on this question, consider Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 4:12, and Hebrews 10:32-36.

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Supplemental Commentary: Revelation 3:7-13
“To the Church in Philadelphia”

- **The “Key of David” in Revelation 3:7**

- Jesus holds the “key of David” in Revelation 3:7. “The **key** represents the authority of David (cf. 1:18 and Matthew 16:19), another way of saying that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ (Rev 5:5; 22:16), the one who fulfills the promise that an heir of David would sit on the throne (cf. 2 Samuel 7; Ps. 89:28-29, 35-37; 132:10-11; Isa. 55:3; Jer. 30:9; 33:15, 17, 20-22; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5). ... The authority of Jesus is underscored, for what he opens cannot be shut, and what he shuts cannot be opened” (Schreiner, “Revelation” in *Expositor’s Commentary*, 590).
- Isaiah 22:22 says, “I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

- **The “Open Door” in Revelation 3:7-8**

- The “open door” in this passage represents access to God. “Jesus has given them [the Philadelphian Christians] access to his presence. [...] Jesus has opened a door for them that no one can shut. It may be that the open door refers to an opportunity for mission and evangelism, since elsewhere the NT speaks of an open door with this meaning (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:13). It seems more likely, however, that the reference here is to entry into God’s presence” (Schreiner, “Revelation” in *Expositor’s Commentary*, 590).

- **The “Synagogue of Satan” in Revelation 3:9**

- “One source, perhaps the primary source, of opposition to the Philadelphian church is identified. Similar to the situation in Smyrna, the Jews in Philadelphia had probably taken advantage of their privileged civic status and told the Roman authorities that Christians were not truly Jews, thereby exposing them to persecution from the state. Jews received a special exemption from Rome, but the same exemption was not given to Christianity, a new and strange movement. Jesus, however, did not forsake the church in Philadelphia, which was composed most likely of both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews who did not believe in Jesus claimed to be the true gathering – i.e., the true synagogue – of God, but they were actually a “synagogue of Satan” because they rejected [Jesus] and discriminated against Christians. True Jews are those who belong to Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3)” (Schreiner, “Revelation” in *Expositor’s Commentary*, 590-91).
- The church in Smyrna also suffered because of the “synagogue of Satan” (see Revelation 2:9). In Smyrna, “the church [was] the object of condemnation and slander from the Jewish synagogue. Judaism was a legal religion under the Roman Empire, and the Christian movement for many years living under the protection of the Jewish banner. Presumably, however, the Jews who belonged to the synagogue of Smyrna, which had a large Jewish community, were reporting the Smyrnan Christians to the local authorities, declaring that they weren’t members of the synagogue, weren’t truly Jews, and didn’t deserve legal protection. But such Jews were not really God’s people, says John. Instead they were a

synagogue of Satan” (Schreiner, “Revelation” in *Expository Commentary*, 574; See Rev 2:9, Rev 3:9, John 8:44, Rom 2:28-29, and Gal 6:15).

- **The “Earth Dwellers” in Revelation 3:10**

- “Those who dwell on the earth” in 3:10 is a reference to those who do not follow Jesus. “In every case [in Revelation], the term refers to unbelievers” (Schreiner, “Revelation” in *Expositor’s Commentary*, 591). For more examples, see Revelation 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x]; 13:8, 12, 14 [2x]; 17:2, 8.

- **The “Pillar in the Temple of God” in Revelation 12**

- “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” (Revelation 3:12).
- Philadelphia’s history sheds some light on the context for this verse. In 17^{AD}, Philadelphia was shaken by an earthquake. Caesar sent imperial aid to Philadelphia for reconstruction. “In appreciation for imperial reconstruction aid after an earthquake (A.D.17), Philadelphia was briefly renamed Neocaesarea (“Caesar’s New City”), but Jesus promises his suffering church an infinitely greater name, ‘the city of my God, the new Jerusalem’” (Dennis Johnson, “Revelation” in *ESV Study Bible*, 2468, fn. 3:7-13).