

The Church of the Open Door

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Reading

Rev 3:7-12 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 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, says these things: 8 I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name. 9 Behold, I give out of those of the synagogue of Satan, those saying themselves to be Jews and are not, but lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the habitable world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast to that which you have, so that no one may take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will go out no more. And I will write upon 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 My new name.



1. History of Philadelphia

Philadelphia/Alesehir is located approximately 80 miles east of Smyrna/Izmir and 26 miles southwest of Sardis. It stands on the Cogamis River, a tributary of the Hermus river.

The city of brotherly love, Philadelphia, was founded by the Pergamon king, Attalos II for his brother Eumenes, though some sources site it being Eumenes who founded the city for Attalos II. The majority, however, seem to hold to the former, and thus it seems the most likely.

Philadelphia always stayed faithful to the Christian faith until the end of its history, a powerful testament to the nature of a church for which Jesus had no admonition nor condemnation.

Ancient writer Strabo who visited the area wrote that the city suffered from so many earthquakes that the people of Philadelphia lived in their farm houses in the countryside. The earthquakes are amply recorded in history, a severe one occurring in 17 AD, which destroyed this city and eleven others. Sardis fared worse from the initial quake, but Philadelphia shook more frequently from severe aftershocks, traumatizing the population. Strabo noted the city was “*ever subject to quakes*”.

The chief deity of Philadelphia was Dionysius, the Greek god of wine (the Roman Bacchus), due to the fertile soil and ample water supplies.

2. The Key of David

Before we start, there is an important item to understand concerning a key that Jesus holds. In verse 7, John wrote that Christ is the One "*who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*" Christ had set an open door before the church that "*no one can shut.*"

What was this key that unlocked a door that could not be shut? The answer lies in the key and door metaphor, which is found in the writings of the prophet Isaiah. He referred to an individual of his time named Shebna who had charge of the palace of the Judean king. The prophet Isaiah said the Lord would replace Shebna with a man named Eliakim.

Isa 22:20-24 And in that day it shall be, even I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah. 21 and I will clothe him with your robe, and will fasten your girdle on him, and I will give your authority into his hand. And he shall be a father to the people of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22 And the key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24 And they shall hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the offshoots, all small vessels, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of jars.

The Lord would "*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*" (Isaiah 22:22). Eliakim would be a gatekeeper who would decide who could or could not have access to the king.

In the book of Revelation, John used this Old Testament metaphor to get across a vital message to the church in Philadelphia, and thereby to all Christians. That is, Christ has the key of David. He opens the door for the church and allows it to come into the presence of God. In short, Christ has granted Christians access to the presence of God, his kingdom and eternal life. Not only does Christ open the door, he *is* the door to the kingdom (John 10:7, 9). So, it is Jesus who presents himself to the church as the way to salvation (John 14:6).

3. Introduction

The church at Philadelphia was a church of awesome opportunity. Jesus comes to them and unveils to them a vision of what they could do. This church:

- Could influence people to enter an open door and worship the Lord, i.e., a revival church
- Could influence people to know that God loves them, i.e., an influential church
- Is a church where people recognize that the name of God is there, i.e., the presence of God is there

4. God Gives Grace

a. Vision

The greatest thing that God gives to His church is vision, i.e., an open door. The Philadelphia church is similar to any church open to the moving of the Holy Spirit, in that God is giving us an opportunity to be a church that can be part of changing this nation. Therefore, like the Philadelphia church, we need to have a great vision of an open door. Such things come from our vision:

- Our vision comes from God, i.e., we did not work the vision up. I believe God's vision has become our vision
- A vision of reaching those of the "synagogue of Satan" so they come and worship God. This is a vision of influencing those in a liberal church, a heretical church, a cult, a false religion, and the secular-humanist
- It is a vision of continual revival; God's presence is there because revival is when God pours His presence out on His people

b. Opportunities

Philadelphia is the church of the open door. The greatest thing about the Philadelphia church is its great opportunity. There have been many churches that have had greater opportunities than us. Think of churches:

- In larger countries, but we're in small Luxembourg
- Filled with wealthy people, but overall we're a church of average wage earners
- With the support of mega ministries, but for years we have laboured on as the only English-speaking Pentecostal church in Luxembourg

c. Open Doors

Oasis is a very unusual church because it is in a very unusual situation. It is a church that no one would plan to build, but God is doing it. So, our vision must become God's vision, because God saw us long before we saw Him. In addition, God saw what we could do long before we saw any '*open door*' of opportunity.

Why people cannot see open doors?

- Other churches have disappointed them
- Parents or friends have disappointed them
- Crises have hurt their families
- Unfaithful preachers
- The people refused to stop Satan by intercessory prayer and overcoming faith, so they gave in to sin and became spiritually blinded
- Just living a normal, modern life and forgetting God

As we read the passage today, there are several things we need to see in the Philadelphia church that apply to us:

- Only God can open a door that no man can shut. We have the opportunity to change the world, only God can give us that opportunity.
- Only God can shut a door that no man can open. Think of the shut doors in our lives. Was it not only God who opened the right door for us?
- I believe God has called us all to Oasis for a divine purpose

d. Jesus Knows

Notice the phrase, "*I know your works.*" The Philadelphia church came under the scrutiny of Jesus Christ, just as we must come under His scrutiny. No one knows us like Jesus Christ. Only the head of the church, Jesus, can inspect every part of Oasis and correctly know our condition.

- Jesus sees our internal life
- Jesus sees our external life
- Jesus sees our family life
- Jesus knows the '*Ananias and Sapphiras*' living among us
- Jesus knows our past successes
- Jesus knows our past failures
- Jesus knows our problems
- Jesus knows our difficulties

Of all the seven churches in the book of Revelation, Philadelphia was the ideal church, and the one against which Jesus had no accusations nor did he find any sin there. However, Philadelphia was not a perfect city.

e. They Could Overcome

Philadelphia was a city of many temples, and was called “the little Athens” because of its many idols/gods. It was on the edge of a great plain, which was called, ‘*burned land*,’ because it was a volcanic plain bearing the marks of a great lava flow and ashes of volcanoes

The people in Philadelphia were constantly depressed after a massive earthquake in 17 AD, because earthquakes continued on a regular yearly basis. In fact, it is interesting to note that, according to history (see above) Philadelphia was a place terrorized by earthquakes, and that Jesus made a point of promising to “*make them a pillar in the temple of My God.*” A pillar is a support, something which holds steady that around it. What a great promise to those who lived in constant turmoil from an unsteady and unpredictable earth, that they themselves would become a solidifying, a steadying force.

Let’s think about their situation, suppose your house was destroyed, every year and you had to rebuild it. Would you get discouraged and give up? Every time there was a new earthquake, you would be reminded of the past destruction. It would seem to me that the people of Philadelphia would have seen a different door:

- A doorway of fear
- A doorway of pessimism
- A doorway of defeat

Yet, in this city, there was a church that had done more for God than any other of the seven churches in the Revelation. They were living closer to the Lord, and He had no condemnation against them, i.e., no word about their sin. Their challenge was the future. Would they go through the open door that Jesus was holding open for them?

5. Our Challenge Is The Future

Do not be defeated by the atmosphere of a small church in a smaller country. Do not think that we cannot do anything or that God cannot do anything. Do not become pessimistic because of your family or friends. Look to Jesus who holds the door open for you, and for Oasis. Do not allow men, spirits, or anyone to imprison your mind. If we are going to be a nation-changing church, it must have people with nation-changing faith and people with nation-changing attitudes.

6. What Can You Know About Jesus?

The passage says that there are four things that you can know about Jesus. First, Jesus is walking in the middle of seven churches. The word ‘*middle*’ means the very centre. Jesus was just as close to the sinning church of Thyatira as He was to the compromising church of Pergamum. He was no closer to Philadelphia than He was to any other church. Do you know what that means? Jesus is just as close to Oasis as He is to any other church in this country, or in the world. All have the opportunity to do what He is challenging us to do. But, which church will look to Jesus for its vision? And which church will become a world-changing church?

Notice how Jesus introduced Himself to the Philadelphia church.

- Jesus is holy (v. 7, *“He that is holy”*). We must see the holiness of Jesus and want to be like Him. We must understand the indwelling of Jesus in our lives, and be holy, for we are His Temple.
- Jesus is true (v. 7, *“He that is true”*). We must understand that what Jesus tells us is the truth; He would not mislead us. If He challenges us with an “open door of opportunity,” it means we can go through it and do exploits for God.
- He has the keys of David (v. 7, *“He that has the keys of David”*). Remember, keys represent authority. In another place Jesus says, *“I have the keys of death and Hell.”* The next time you get a little discouraged, listen for the jingle of the keys, it may be Jesus coming.

7. Claim Your Door

Jesus tells us He has set before us an open door, but what does He know about us? What does He say about us that He said about the Philadelphia church? *“You have a little strength, have kept my Word, and have not denied My name.”*

- This means that we do not have to be great, powerful or wealthy to be the church to change the world. According to Jesus, the church of Philadelphia only had a *“little strength.”* They did have something else; they *“kept His Word.”* They did not *“deny His name.”*

I think these three things describe us. We do not have massive strength, we have tried to keep His Word, and we have not denied His name. So, now what must we do? Now we must step through the open door and become the church to change the world.

8. What Will It Take To Move Through The Door?

I find that people usually make a decision to follow God when:

- They are fed up with the oppression of sin, so that they want to move forward
- They are tired of mediocrity, so they want to do something with God
- They have learned enough from the Word so they can begin to march forward through the door
- They have been challenged by a preacher, through the Word of God, and they want to follow him through the door

Suppose someone told you that there is a new house down at the end of the street. Suppose they said you could have it all. All you have to do is walk through the open front door, and it is yours. What would you do? Some would say,

- “I don’t believe you.”
- “I don’t have the money.”
- “You don’t mean it.”
- “I just couldn’t accept it.”

If someone offers you a new house just for walking through an open door . . . do not think about it ... do not pray about it ... do not analyze it ... do not even ask if it is the right colour. -- **Walk Through The Door.**

9. What Should Characterize Your Walk?

- Immediately walk: Don't drag your feet, but immediately do God's will
- Obediently walk: Don't doubt the Lord, but follow Him expressively
- Joyfully walk: If the Lord has opened the door, He has good things on the other side
- Confidently walk: If God has opened the door, it won't slam shut in your face
- Expectantly walk: If God has opened the door, He will help you get through and show you what to do after you get on the other side

If you have never really accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour, would you do it right now? Do not delay or put it off. If you would like to receive Christ by faith, pray a simple prayer in your heart, like this:

“Dear Lord, I acknowledge that I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died for my sins on the cross, and rose again the third day. I repent of my sins. By faith I receive the Lord Jesus as my Saviour. You promised to save me, and I believe You, because You are God and cannot lie. I believe right now that the Lord Jesus is my personal Saviour, and that all my sins are forgiven through His precious blood. I thank You, dear Lord, for saving me. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

If you are willing to pray that prayer, God will hear you and save you. Join with us as we prepare to walk through the open door that Jesus provides.