***“Reviewing Revelation”—Chapter 3:7-13--Philadelphia***

**Each church receives a message composed of seven parts: (1) Name of the Church, (2) Title of Christ as sender, (3) Commendation, (4) Concern, (nevertheless), (5) Exhortation (advice/threat), (6) Promise to overcomer, and (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”….** The promise is a *reward* for past perseverance, not the *equipping* to persevere in the future. "As far as the Philadelphian church was concerned, the rapture of the church was presented to them as an imminent hope." This historical approach to the seven churches of Revelation is useful if these periods are seen as broad, imprecise descriptions of the church through history, allowing for generous periods of overlap. For example, it seems that the last four churches will persist until the coming of Jesus (see [Revelation 2:25](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+2:25&t1=en_nas), [3](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+2:3&t1=en_nas):3, 3:11, and 3:20). If one accepts these seven letters as descriptive of the flow of church history, it does not require that we see them as exclusive, rigidly sequential ages. It is good to remember that if these letters are a prophecy of the course of church history, this is their *secondary* significance. First and foremost, the letters were written to real, existing first-century congregations, and to "all who have an ear to hear." The youngest of the cities, now known as Alashehir, was built on an area acquired by Pergamos in 189 B.C. READ CHUCK MISSLER, PAGE 72-73. As well, we must remember that every age has had *some* characteristics of *all* seven churches. Though certain historical periods are marked by the conditions spoken of in these letters, we could never say that "only one letter" applies only to us or our age. Joseph Seiss speaks to this well:

We need to hear what the Spirit says to the *churches* (in the plural sense), not just one church. It is also interesting to note that Paul addressed seven churches: Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Phillipi, and Thessalonica (some also note with interest that Jesus gives seven "Kingdom Parables"). Early commentators on the Book of Revelation emphasized that as seven is a number of completion and fulfillment, so Jesus and Paul wrote to seven churches as an indication that they were in fact speaking to the complete church, not just these seven congregations. Speaking to seven churches means speaking to the church in perfection, *in completion and totality*. As one commentator puts it, "The churches of all time are comprehended in seven."

**Chuck Smith, *What the World is Coming To* (1977)**

*Ephesian*: The early church, up until the death of John.

*Smyrna*: 2nd to 4th centuries, Roman persecutions.

*Pergamite*: Beginning in 316, "development of church-state system under Constantine."

*Thyatiran*: The unrepentant, unfaithful church destined to go through the Great Tribulation.

*Sardian*: Dead Protestantism.

*Philadelphian*: The faithful church of the last days.

*Laodicean*: The apostate church of the last days

**Clarence Larkin, *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World* (1918)**

*Ephesian*: a.d. 70 to 170 - "The backslidden church."

*Smyrna*: 170 to 312 - "The persecuted church."

*Pergamite*: 312 to 606 - "The licentious church."

*Thyatiran*: 606 to 1520 - "A lax church."

*Sardian*: 1520 to 1750 - "A dead church."

*Philadelphian*: 1750 to 1900 - "A favored church."

*Laodicean*: 1900 to the end - "A lukewarm church."

**Taylor Bunch, *The Seven Epistles of Christ* (1947)**

*Ephesian*: "The universal church of the days of the apostles, or the first century of Christianity."

*Smyrna*: Second and third centuries, "the age of martyrdom, when pagan Roman emperors attempted to destroy Christianity with the violence of the sword."

*Pergamite*: Covering 250 years (from Emperor Constantine to Emperor Justinian the Great) "the church was exalted to royal power and kingly authority through a union, or marriage, with the state."

*Thyatiran*: 538 to 1520, the corrupt, political church of the Middle Ages.

*Sardian*: 1520 to the mid 1700's ("but doubtless embraces the entire history of Protestantism to the end of the gospel dispensation"); the church of the Reformation, and a partial work.

*Philadelphian*: From the mid 1700's to the present; the church of 18th and 19th century revivals, worldwide missions movements, and renewed expectation of Jesus' return.

*Laodicean*: Middle 1800's to the end of the Christian dispensation, "a sad comment on modern Christendom."

**Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (written in 1983)**

"Although it is by no means the dominant theme, there is a sense also in which the seven churches seem to depict the respective stages of development and change of Christ's churches during the ensuing centuries. History has, indeed, shown such a general development through the years . . . He is not capricious in His selection. There is bound to be some significance in the *sequence* of the seven, as well as the total."

Following is a chart from page 66 of *The Revelation Record*:

**Church Period in Church History Dates**

Ephesus Apostolic Age Before a.d. 100

Smyrna Age of Persecution a.d. 100 to 313

Pergamos Imperial Church Age 313 to 590

Thyatira Age of Papacy 590 to 1517

Sardis Reformation Age 1517 to 1730

Philadelphia Missionary Age 1730 to 1900

Laodicea Age of Apostasy 1900 to ?

**Joseph Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (written in 1900)**

*Ephesian:* Warmth and love and labor for Christ; defection beginning with a gradual cooling of love, false professions and clergy/laity distinctions.

*Smyrna:* Sweet and precious martyrdom, but a progression of clergy and laity distinctions and Judaizing tendencies, with an increasing departure from the simplicity of the gospel.

*Pergamite:* True faith more and more disappearing; clericalism systematized, union with the world.

*Thyatiran:* Purple and glory for the corrupt priesthood; false prophets enthroned in a time when truth was exchanged for darkness (up to the Reformation).

*Sardian:* Separation and return to the rule of Christ; many great names, but also deadness, and lethargy (Protestant centuries).

*Philadelphian:* Closer adherence to Jesus' Word, more fraternity among Christians (modern evangelical movement of the 19th century).

Seiss does not give much of a description of the Laodicean church along this same pattern, because he felt that in his day (1900), it was yet to really emerge upon the scene.

**The worldly believers at Pergamum picture the Church during the Age of Constantine from AD 312 to 606. THE PROPHETIC APPLICATION SO FAR: EPHESUS – from Jesus’ ascension to 160 A.D., SMYRNA—160-312 A.D., PERGAMOS –312-600 A.D., THYATIRA—600-1500 A.D., PHILADELPHIA**

**3:7, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;”**

1. **What is the name of the church? (1) Name of the Church, The name means *brotherly love*,** and this city was the youngest of the seven cities, and was originally founded as a missionary outpost for Hellenism, the culture of ancient Greece. The original purpose behind this key city was to make it a center for spreading Greek language, culture and manners throughout the Asian provinces." (Hocking) "Philadelphia had been built with the deliberate intention that it might become a missionary city. Beyond Philadelphia lay the wilds of Phrygia and the barbarous tribes; and it was intended that the function of Philadelphia should be to spread the Greek language, the Greek way of life, the Greek civilization, throughout the regions beyond." The city gained its name after its founder - Attalus the Second - who was nicknamed *Philadelphos*.
   1. **Describe early Philadelphia. Philadelphia: This was a *prosperous* city. "Philadelphia commanded one of the greatest highways in the world, the highway which led from Europe to the East. Philadelphia was the gateway from one continent to another." (Barclay) Philadelphia: This city was also known for beautiful buildings (it was called the "little Athens") and her E earthquakes, which required frequent evacuations.** “To walk through its temple-scattered streets was to be reminded of Athens, the center of worship of the Olympian gods."

**3:7b, “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;”**

1. **What is the title of Christ in the letter to Philadelphia? (2) Title of Christ as sender,** these things says He who is holy, He who is true: Jesus reminded the church in Philadelphia that He was holy and true. These do not describe "tendencies" within Jesus, but His very being. They also show that Jesus is Yahweh, because He alone is holy in an absolute sense. There are two ancient Greek words that we might translate true. One means "true and not *false*." The other means "true and not *fake*." The ancient Greek word used here for true (*alethinos*) is the second, with the idea of "real" or "genuine." Jesus is true in all of who He is; He is the *real* God and the *real* man.
   1. **Define “holy and true.” See Revelation 6:10, Leviticus 11:44, 21:8, and Isaiah 57:15.**
      1. **At His birth, Luke 1:35.**
      2. **At His death, Acts 2:27.**
      3. **At His present priestly office, Hebrews 7:25……HE IS PRAYING FOR US!**
      4. **TRUE—See Luke 1:75, John 17:3, and I John 5:20.**
   2. **What is the key of David? See Isaiah 22:19-24. He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens**: Jesus showed He is also the keeper of the keys and doors. In this quotation from [Isaiah 22:20-23](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Isaiah+22:20-23&t1=en_nas), Jesus expressed His power and authority, especially to admit and exclude.
      1. **Review Isaiah 22:20-25….NOTE: VERSE 23, “Nail,” is Messianic. VERSE 25, LIKE DANIEL 9, ALLUDES TO THE SAVIOR BEING KILLED.**
      2. **Reference Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 1:32-33, Matthew 28:18, and Revelation 1:18.**
      3. **Keys to the Kingdom—Matthew 16:19 and 18:18.**
      4. **See also I Peter 2:4-9, 16:15-19.**

**8 “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”**

1. **What is the commendation in this letter? (3) Commendation, I know your works: Jesus said this to each of the seven churches. The church at Philadelphia had served God well in difficult circumstances, and Jesus knew it.**
   1. **Discuss this phrase: “I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it.” Evangelistic opportunity. Use 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, and Colossians 4:3. The church in Philadelphia had an open door set before them. Often, an open door speaks of evangelistic opportunity (**[**1 Corinthians 16:9**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Corinthians+16:9&t1=en_nas)**,** [**2**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Corinthians+16:2&t1=en_nas) **Corinthians 2:12, and** [**Colossians 4:3**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Colossians+4:3&t1=en_nas)**). Jesus told them He had opened the door of evangelistic opportunity, and they must go through that door in faith.**
   2. **What is the “open door?”**  In its history, Philadelphia had a great "evangelistic" calling. The city had the mission of spreading Greek culture and language through the whole region. Now Jesus opened the door for the Christians of Philadelphia to spread the culture of His kingdom through the whole region. **See I Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12 and Colossians 4:3.** 
      1. **Read John 10:7, 9, Noah’s ark—Genesis 7:16, Door at the wedding—Matthew 25:1-10.**
   3. **What is the “historical connection” for the Philadelphian Christians with “the open door?”**  There may be another sense to this **open door**. It seems Christians in Philadelphia were excluded from the synagogue ([Revelation 3:9](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+3:9&t1=en_nas)). The **open door** may also speak of their opportunity to enter God's kingdom in contrast with exclusion from the synagogue.
   4. **Compare also with Revelation 3:7, “Jesus is He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.” And no one can shut it**: The emphasis is on unhindered openness. There is nothing that can keep them from their access to this door. Since Jesus is *He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens* ([Revelation 3:7](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+3:7&t1=en_nas)), He had the authority to keep this door open for the Christians in Philadelphia. "David could *shut* or *open* the kingdom of Israel to whom he pleased. He was not bound to leave the kingdom even to his eldest son. He could choose whom he pleased to succeed him. The kingdom of the Gospel, and the kingdom of heaven, are at the disposal of Christ."
   5. **Elaborate on “hast a little strength**.” **See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.** The term **a little strength** does not imply has weakness, but *real* **strength**. They were weak enough to be strong in the Lord. We can be "too strong" or "too big" or too sure of ourselves for God to really use us. The church in Philadelphia had the poverty of spirit to know they really needed God's strength.
   6. **The final commendation is “hast no denied my name.” What does that mean Have kept My word, and have not denied My name**: The church in Philadelphia was faithful to Jesus and His word. The idea behind **have not denied My name** is not only that they expressed their allegiance to Jesus, but that they *lived* in a way that was faithful to the name and character of Jesus. "The church of Philadelphia is commended for keeping the Word of the Lord and not denying His Name. Success in Christian work is not to be measured by any other standard of achievement. It is not rise in ecclesiastical position.

**9”Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”**

1. **What is the concern in this letter? (4) Concern, (nevertheless), THERE IS NONE!**
2. **What is (5) Exhortation (advice/threat), ? I will make those of the synagogue of Satan**: Apparently, the Christians in Philadelphia were persecuted by Jewish people (**the synagogue**). However, these persecuting Jews were Jews in name only (**who say they are Jews and are not, but lie**). In fact, they had no spiritual connection to Abraham or to the people of faith.
   1. **What is the “Synagogue of Satan**?” See Revelation 2:9. In this, Jesus did not speak against *all* Jewish people. It would be entirely wrong to speak of the Jewish people as a whole as **the synagogue of Satan** or those **who say they are Jews and are not**. Jesus spoke of this specific group of Jewish people in Philadelphia who persecuted the Christians during that period. LEGALISTS, REPLACEMENT THEORISTS,
      1. **Review Isaiah 43**:**11-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:5.**
   2. **Review the Millennium reference in “I will make them to come and worship before thy feet**.” Is this vindication? **I will make them come and worship before your feet**: In this, Jesus promised that He would vindicate His people and make sure that their persecutors recognized they were wrong, and that Jesus and His followers were right. The idea is of vindication before self-righteous "spiritual" persecutors. God promised that the church in Philadelphia would be vindicated before their persecutors.
      1. **Review the promise in Isaiah 45:14 and I Corinthians 14:24-25.** God promised Israel that Gentiles would honor them and acknowledge their God ([Isaiah 45:14](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Isaiah+45:14&t1=en_nas)). Now the tables were somewhat turned, and these Jewish people "will play the role of the heathen and acknowledge that the church is the Israel of God." [1 Corinthians 14:24-25](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Corinthians+14:24-25&t1=en_nas) speaks of unbelievers falling down in the midst of Christians to worship God. This establishes that it wasn't Christians who were being worshipped, but God was worshipped in the *presence* of Christians.
      2. **Does Jesus love the Jews? Use verse 9 as a source.** **And to know that I have loved you**: As those who were once their enemies worshipped along side them, they were destroyed as enemies. They now knew that Jesus had **loved** these people they once persecuted. The best way to destroy the enemies of the Gospel is to pray that God would change them into friends.
         1. **Review the justice displayed here**. **See Revelation 6:10.** Persecuted people often long for justice against their persecutors ([Revelation 6:10](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+6:10&t1=en_nas)). A passage from a second century Christian shows this: "What sight shall wake my wonder, what my laughter, my joy and exultation? As I see all those kings, those great kings . . groaning in the depths of darkness! And the magistrates who persecuted in the name of Jesus, liquefying in fiercer flames than they kindled in their rage against the Christians!"
      3. **What is the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world**?” Jesus also promised them protection from the **hour of trial** coming on the **whole world**. Most Bible scholars see this **hour of trial** as a prophetic reference to the **Messianic woes, the Great Tribulation, which precede Jesus' earthly kingdom. Jesus promised to keep these Christians from that hour of trial. THIS IS THE ONLY LETTER WITH A PROMISE OF KEEPING THEM OUT OF THE TIME OF THE “GREAT TRIBULAION.”**
3. **Who are the “earth dwellers?” See Revelation 17:8.** To test those who dwell on the earth: The test is directed against those who dwell on the earth. This phrase is used nine times in the Book of Revelation, and it speaks of those who are *not* saved in Jesus. [Revelation 17:8](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+17:8&t1=en_nas) makes the term synonymous with the lost: *And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world*. This test is for *unbelievers*, not Christians. Those who dwell on the earth "refers not to believers but to unbelievers who are objects of God's wrath" throughout Revelation.
   1. **Reference Revelation 6:10, 17, 8:13, 11:10, 12:12, 13:8, 12, and 14, 14:6, and 17:8, I Thessalonians 1:10, 5:4,9,**
   2. **Contrast them with the believers. See Ephesians 2:6 and Colossians 3:3. Christians are different. Though we walk on this earth, our dwelling place is in heaven. We have been seated in heavenly places in Jesus (**[**Ephesians 2:6**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Ephesians+2:6&t1=en_nas)**). We do not dwell on the earth, our life is hidden in Jesus (**[**Colossians 3:3**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Colossians+3:3&t1=en_nas)**).**
4. **What is the “Promise to overcomer?”—6-- Keep you from the hour of trial**: Does this imply an *escape* *before* the Great Tribulation, or does it promise *protection in* it? Each side believes this passage easily supports their position. Those who believe the church will be here on earth during this time of Great Tribulation focus on Jesus' **command to persevere**, and say the context demands seeing this as protection that enables the faithful to **persevere** in the period.
   1. **Refer to Matthew 24**:21. Those who believe that Jesus will come for His church before this time of Great Tribulation note that protection is promised from the very **hour of trial**, not just the trial itself. They also point to the worldwide, inescapable cataclysm predicted in the Great Tribulation ([Matthew 24:21](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Matthew+24:21&t1=en_nas) and Revelation chapters 6, 8-9, 16).

**11 “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”**

1. **What does “quickly” imply? "The expression 'quickly' is to be understood as something which is sudden and unexpected, not necessarily immediate."**
2. **Does “hold fast” parallel the solid foundation mentioned in Revelation 3:8?**
3. **Which “crown” is portrayed here? That no one may take your crown: If they failed to hold fast, their crown might be *given* to another. The idea is not that it might be *stolen* by another, but *given*. This was not a crown of royalty, given because of royal birth. This was a crown of victory. Jesus encouraged His saints to finish their course with victory, to "play the second half" just as strongly as they "played the first half."**
   1. **See Proverbs 4:23. "Never forget that the man most likely to steal your crown is *yourself*. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life' (**[**Proverbs 4:23**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Proverbs+4:23&t1=en_nas)**). You are in no greater danger from anyone or anything than from yourself." (Havner)**
   2. **What are the five crowns in the Bible for believers?** 
      1. 1. The incorruptible crown: 1 Cor. 9:24,25. **This is also called the imperishable crown. This crown is given to believers who faithfully run the race, who crucify every selfish desire in the flesh and point men to Jesus. God calls some people to do things that will require some sacrifice in the way they will live and conduct their lives. Some people may be called to be a missionary in a far off and poor country. They will literally be working for almost nothing in earthly terms. They will have to sacrifice the money, possessions and life style they could have had, if they stayed home in their own country. This verse also implies that these people will also receive this crown for the sacrifices they were willing to make for God in order to successfully complete the call and mission God had called them to do.**
      2. 2. The crown of rejoicing: 1 Thess. 2:19, 20. & Dan 12:3 **To those who faithfully are witnesses to the saving grace of God and leads souls to Jesus. This crown has also been named the soul winner's crown. It seems to indicate here that God will be giving a crown to those who have been witnessing to others and leading people to Christ.**
      3. 3. The crown of life: James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10.  **For those believers who endure trials, tribulations, and severe suffering, even unto death** Rev. 2:8-11. **This crown is also referred to as the martyr's crown. Jesus says that He will give this crown to those who undergo severe hardship, testing, tribulation and/or physical death on His behalf. Probably being willing to die for your faith in God would be the ultimate sacrifice. It is the greatest act of courage and love that you can show God. Christians who have been martyred for their faith throughout history will not only be given this crown of life, but other rewards once they enter into heaven.**
      4. 4. The crown of righteousness: 2 Tim. 4:8. **To those who love the appearing of Christ, who anxiously wait and look forward to the day when He will return for His saints. This crown is given to those who have lived a good and righteous life for God while living down here on earth.**
      5. 5. The crown of glory: 1 Pet. 5:1~4. **This is the pastor’s crown and will be given to the ministers who faithfully feed the flock of God. . This probably could also include preachers, teachers, Sunday School teachers, missionaries and all those who teach the Word of God in their respective ministries.** 
         1. Rev. 4:10,11 the twenty–four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." **These elders place their crowns at Jesus feet and if they do, would not all of us want to more so do because of our love for Him. As you can see each crown is given to those who do a good work on His behalf and it appears that we will want to place whatever crowns we may have at the feet of Jesus when we come face to face with Him.**

**12”Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”**

1. **What is promised to the overcomer?** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar: Overcomers were told that they would be as a pillar in the temple of My God. Pillars were pictures of strength, stability, and dignified beauty. The ancient city of Philadelphia suffered from frequent earthquakes. When a building collapsed in an earthquake often all that remained standing were the huge pillars.
   1. **Elaborate on “He shall go out no more.”** The overcomer would have a place of permanence and stability with God, in contrast to an uncertain place in this world. "The citizens of Philadelphia lived an unsettled and tremulous life. Whenever the earthquake tremors came, and they came often, the people of Philadelphia fled from the city out into the open country, to escape the falling masonry and the flying stones which accompanied a severe earthquake shock. Then, when the earth was quiet again, they returned. In their fear the people of Philadelphia were always going out and coming in; they were always fleeing from the city and then returning to it."
   2. **Is the reference to the “I will write on him the name of My God,” a show of intimacy for the overcomer? . . . I will write on him My new name: The overcomer also received many names - of God, the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Jesus. These names are marks of identification because they show who we belong to. They are marks of intimacy, because they show we are privileged to know Him in ways others are not.**
   3. **Talk about the “pillar.” This works together well with the image of a pillar. In the ancient world, having a special inscribed pillar added to one of the temples sometimes honored a faithful city servant or distinguished priest. "Philadelphia honored its illustrious sons by putting their names on the pillars of its temples, so that all who came to worship might see and remember."**

**13 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”**

1. **What is the closing? (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”…. ? He who has an ear, let him hear: We all want to hear the praise and encouragement Jesus gave to the church at Philadelphia. If we will be like this church, we must stay on their foundation, which was Jesus' name and Jesus' word. We must also depend on their source of strength which was Jesus, not themselves.**
2. **Is there a “modern theme” to the Philadelphian letter which could apply to America?**

***And, here are the promises:***

**John 17:24, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”**

**Revelation 3:8 “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”**

**Revelation 3:10, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”**