

Revelation 3:9-

If just joining us, we're looking at the book of Revelation and in chapters 2-3 we see seven letters to seven churches as Jesus speaks to each group.

These churches are representative of all churches everywhere in their weaknesses and their strengths. While Jesus does address them in their context, His words find resonance with churches across the centuries and the continents.

M. Gorman (RRR) Perhaps we should look at the seven messages as one message, calling the church to be the aggregate of all the explicit and implicit marks of a holy church found in these two chapters of Revelation.

Pastor-theologian John Stott, for instance, finds the marks of the church to be love (Ephesus), suffering (Smyrna), truth (Pergamum), holiness (Thyatira), authenticity (Sardis), mission (Philadelphia), and wholeheartedness (Laodicea).²²

Message to Philadelphia

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

G.K. BEALE – Handbook of OT IN THE NT

The main idea of the letter to Philadelphia may be stated as follows: Christ commends Philadelphia for its persevering witness, in which he will empower them further; he exhorts them to continue to persevere so that they may "overcome" and consequently inherit consummate end-time eternal life in fellowship and identification with Christ, which has been inaugurated in the present.

A key part of this imagery is that of the TEMPLE.

At the time this letter was received the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. The temple imagery is used to convey a message of hope and a heavenly future in the presence of God for those who overcome. Whether the opposition comes from the Jews, Greeks, or Romans, Revelation shows that they are all under the dominion of Babylon. (Koester p 333)

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO US?

The church today faces a different set of challenges that are also under the dominion of "Babylon" – the ungodly imperial power that seeks to impose its will and values on the earth. It may take the form of a secular threat, or a political threat, or some sort of new age spiritual threat rooted in modern paganism or watered-down Christian theism.

- ❖ DESCRIPTION OF Jesus v. 7 He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens

RAYBURN “The identification and description of Jesus Christ in this letter is an apt identification because the letter concerns the church’s relationship to the Jews of the city.” This is an identification of Jesus as divine. God Himself is identified in the OT as ‘holy and true’.

It is because they trust Jesus as being “holy and true” that they encounter hostility from the Jews, AND it is why they hold firm in the faith.

If Jesus is just a good teacher who has good things to say but who might also be wrong in areas, then why hold fast to Him?

The question for all people to answer is WHO IS Jesus?

At some point in your existence, you will come up against that question. You can consider it now and enjoy a relationship with Him, or you can face that question in death.

Christmas season will soon be upon us, and the person of Jesus will be front and center, either through a direct message or by omission.

<https://albertmohler.com/2021/10/07/briefing-10-7-21>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10053095/Emma-Watsons-former-school-cancels-Christmas-inclusive-touchpoints.html>

The prestigious Dragon School of Oxford England is changing the names of its academic terms from Christmas, Easter and Summer terms to Autumn, Spring, and Summer terms so as to be ‘inclusive’ and not offend anyone. But the school administration admitted that no one had complained. They will still keep their Christmas charity event.

Beale – Handbook of the Use of OT IN THE NT P. 134ff

The key of David, an OT idea, is the key to the messianic kingdom.

The Key of David idea comes from Isaiah 22:22 where it refers to the transfer of authority from Shebna to Eliakim. Eliakim is said to be given the keys to rule and guide Israel, but he is not the ultimate holder of the keys.

Since Chapter 22 puts Israel in line for condemnation along with the pagan nations, the place of Eliakim is a temporary pointer to the final one who will have the keys of David – Jesus.

Rev 1:18 shows that Jesus has authority death and Hades and 3:17 expands that to show that Jesus has authority over those entering the kingdom of God.

Jesus’ rule extends over true Israel, but the Jews who oppose the church do not understand or accept that.

The point of the reference to Is 22 is that Jesus holds the power of salvation and judgement. P. 141

Eliakim lives in a time where the spiritual realm and earthly realm are mingled. While Jesus is the head of all spiritual realms, His earthly realm will be fully realized with the coming of the New Jerusalem.

While this comparison of Is 22 with Rev 3:18 is not used elsewhere in the NT nor significantly in early Christian writing, it does give us some valuable insights as we consider Christ in the overall context of Revelation.

P 146 Beale

Christology

I. John views Christ as identified with Yahweh. Just as Eliakim was equal in status to Israel’s king, so Christ is equal in status to God, the eschatological king. The reference to Jesus as “holy” and “true” (the former of which we saw was a repeated attribute of God in Isaiah) directly precedes the Isaiah 22:22 citation and thus enhances Jesus’s identification with God. 2. Christ is also the ruler of eschatological Israel.

Soteriology

Christ's salvific authority pertains primarily to his sovereignty over who enters into the kingdom. Christ "opens" the door to some, while he "shuts" the door to others; salvation and exclusion from the kingdom are based in Christ's determinate will, not in human will or actions. Nevertheless, in the context of Revelation 1–3, people are also accountable for whether they respond in faith to the crucified and resurrected Christ (see 1:5–6, 17–18 for this portrayal of Christ).

Eternal Security

To whomever Christ opens the door into the kingdom, that one shall remain there forever. This notion is indicated in 3:12 by the phrase "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore."

Ecclesiology

In this passage Christ is depicted as the head of the local church body, the Davidic king of the true end-time Israel, guiding their activities and opportunities.¹⁶

Evangelism

Christ's sovereignty in providing the Philadelphian Christians with an "open door" of salvation is also an "open door" for them to be effective in conveying the message of salvation to unbelievers. Such an understanding on the part of these Christians likely was a motivation for them to share the message of the gospel with others. The one who holds the Keys is the one who has the power to open doors.

The church that "has no power" should be encouraged to know that they are working by and with the One who has all power. The Christians may feel powerless against the pagan culture and the more prominent synagogue culture, but in reality, the power of Christ is with them. Jesus wants to assure them so that they will stand firm and hold fast to Him.

While certain doors may be closed to them in the culture, they have an open door for that which is eternal.

Insofar as the letter will be taken up in part with the relations between the church and the Jews in Philadelphia, it is natural that it should open with the affirmation that Jesus is the true Messiah, the one who holds the key of David. The Jews in Philadelphia were, of course, claiming that they were the true people of God; but, in fact, the followers of Christ were the true Jews and the true citizens of God's kingdom. This is not anti-Semitism; it is simply the Christian affirmation that Jesus was and is the Messiah and that, therefore, any Jew who does not recognize him as such has, in the nature of the case, betrayed his or her calling. If Christ is indeed the Messiah, the logic of that position is irrefutable.

The reference to the power of the keys, the authority to let in and cast out of the kingdom, may be due to the fact that a number of the Christians in Philadelphia had been excommunicated from the Jewish synagogue there once they became Christians. But the Jews of the synagogue do not hold the true key to the kingdom of God and cannot let in or cast out. Only Christ has that authority. Rayburn

❖ What He knows V.8

Their deeds. Along with the church of Smyrna, this is the only other church which receives no rebuke or warning of impending discipline.

Dennis JOHNSON Another feature shared by Smyrna and Philadelphia is a lack of visible resources. Jesus knows Smyrna's "poverty," and that Philadelphia has "but little power" (2:9; 3:8). Yet these deficiencies are in appearance only (appearances can be deceiving). In fact, the poor believers in Smyrna are actually rich, and before the powerless Christians of Philadelphia, Jesus has placed an open door that no one can shut against them. This inversion of the world's values and perceptions pervades the New Testament WHERE we see that Christ's power is perfected in our weakness (2 Cor. 12: 9).

V. 8 The door that Jesus, holder of David's key, could mean that Jesus has opened to his weak and excluded followers is the entrance to God's heavenly sanctuary, where they remain forever as pillars in his presence (Rev. 3:7–8, 12).

OR

The open door could be a door for fruitful ministry. We may not have to choose between the two options, but in light of Jesus saying, “I know your deeds” and the statement in v. 9 about the Jews coming to know my love for you gives reason to think that they may bear fruit in their witness.

V. 9 . 9 **Behold, I will cause *those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet and *make them* know that I have loved you.***

In a context where there is a strong synagogue one could expect some conflict. The Jews and the Christians would disagree over the person and role of Jesus along with the relationship of the church and Israel. The Jews being more established would have greater cultural acceptance and could make things hard for the Christians.

Through the Word of Christ, these OT ideas—key, door, city, temple, and pillar—become Christian ideas applied to the church. In this way the Jews will ‘learn that I have loved you’. (Wilcox)

This undeserved favor is at the root of it all. they obey his word only because he has first set his love on them. It also goes further on: the final result of his loving care for them will be that this church of ‘little power’ will be established as an immovable pillar in the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem (verse 12). She will have a triple seal: belonging to God, belonging to God’s city, and belonging to God’s Son. His tender promise to those who are painfully aware of weakness and insecurity is that they shall finally *belong*.

ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT

Rooted in the Love of God, the community of believers will reach out through the open door and bear fruit for the kingdom.

V. 10 – Troubles (TESTINGS) to come upon the whole world

Testings reveal our loyalties – will we remain loyal to Christ or align ourselves with the overlords of the age who oppose God and His kingdom?

The timeline on this is not specific, but blessings and troubles are pointers to the ultimate blessings and troubles that are in store in the great Day of the Lord. Obviously, the end of the world did not come in their day.

This verse is not referring to a RAPTURE of the church out of the world prior to a great tribulation. The promise is not evacuation to avoid tribulations, but rather to be preserved and protected during and through tribulation.

John 17:15 – “I don’t pray to take them out of the world, but to keep them from evil”. This is what is being said here in Revelation 3:10

Here in Revelation Jesus says, “You have kept the word of my perseverance, I will keep you from the hour of testing.”

Jesus is promising to preserve them, their faith, and their eternal salvation even in the midst of trials. We hear echoes of Rom 8: “nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus.”

As Augustine would famously put it, **“Hack me, hew me, burn me here, but spare me hereafter, spare me hereafter.”**

❖ Exhortations: v. 11 Hold Fast

This is a common refrain throughout Revelation and all of scripture.

“... no one take your crown” (laurel wreath) – given to victors or sign of public honor

❖ **PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS v. 12** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

They will be made pillars in the Temple of the Lord

(rf: 2 Kings 25:13- final invasion of Israel by the King of Babylon, the pillars were broken down and carried to Babylon.)

Being a PILLAR in the house of God signifies being in His presence (Koester) It was common in the ancient world for the names of the 'gods' or rulers to be inscribed on columns in the various temples. These names of v 12 identify the believers as belonging to God and to His kingdom. (Koester 327)

21:22 indicates that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem because God and Christ are the Temple. This creates a tension with 3:12. What about this??

One scholar, Mounce, simply says, "Apocalyptic imagery is fluid"

Remember this from Dr. Ralph Davis (week 1 of this series) regarding apocalyptic literature

Roughly, I would say that biblical apocalyptic is a sort of prophecy that seeks to enlighten and encourage a people despised and cast off by the world with a vision of the God who will come to impose HIS kingdom on the wreckage and rebellion of human history – and it communicates this message through the use of wild, scary, imaginative, bizarre and head-scratching imagery.¹

We come to the Table because we are united to Christ by faith.

This is a means of grace which enables us to 'hold fast' to Christ.

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