

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Revelation: I have a letter for you! Philadelphia: The Poor Little Rich Church**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer—July 24, 2011**

**Revelation 3:7-13 (ESV)**

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

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them 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 them my new name. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

What have we learned so far:

- Jesus is the star of Revelation
- The Jesus of Revelation is very little like the stereo-type of Jesus we often think about in the New Testament accounts (Chapter 1)
- Jesus is with the seven churches (Revelation 2:1) - "I know your works"
- Remember, repent, and return
- Rich man's church – a dangerous curse tempting us to forget our first love and becoming indifferent
- The sins of idolatry, immorality, indulgence and indifference

Now finally we turn to the last church in the list of seven; Philadelphia - twenty-seven miles southeast of Sardis. Philadelphia still exists in the town called Allah-shear, "the city of God." . . . There is a population of about 25,000 of mostly Greeks and Turks but Christians there have twenty-five places of worship, five of them large and regular churches. An Eastern Orthodox Bishop resides there and it is reported that there are twenty paid Christian clergy.

It was from this little city that William Penn borrowed the name Philadelphia for his immigrant Quakers that had moved to Pennsylvania from Europe for religious freedom and hoped to make a community rich in brotherly love, following after what many thought was the first century model church.

**Revelation 3:7**

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.'"

Jesus introduces Himself in a new way, not borrowing from chapter one but, again in a language that the Philadelphia church would understand – he introduces himself as Holy and True – The church's most profound character.

**Isaiah 22:22**

[In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand.] And 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.

You see the house of David speaks loud to the church of Philadelphia, they knew that Kings hold the key to life and death, freedom and slavery. And Their King was the King of Kings!

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**Revelation 3:8**

I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

***The Open Door—Opportunities to seize***

Doors can be deceiving. How can you know what is behind them. When do you let a shut door be shut and when do you kick it in?

***“He who opens and no one shuts”***

In verse 7 Jesus presses this theme for the church when He introduces Himself - ***“He who opens and no one shuts”***- or better “the one ***presently opening*** and no one shall shut.” The open door depends on the timing of God. Philadelphia was another gateway city, and was the center of persecution from two sides, both Jews and Romans. By their testimony under fire, a door has opened for ministry and mission minded living. If God is making the opportunity, the church must respond.

Do you know why? The door may not stay open forever. See how in verse 7 we read:

***“He who shuts and no one opens”***

He is actively holding open the door such that no one else can shut it. And God is actively shutting things which are to remain shut. Men must respond while the door is held open by God for once it is shut, there is no recourse for entry:

**Luke 13:25**

***When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from?’***

By His sovereign, regal authority, Jesus opens opportunities for the church. He sovereignly acts on behalf of the local church. Places of opportunity that would otherwise be closed, Jesus acts in those situations and makes them possible. By His will alone we can do miracles on His behalf; if

we are willing to walk through the door. And when He shuts doors that word is emphatic. Not a simple closed but the word "shuts" means locked or barred. Jesus bars certain church situations in His providence from happening. Jesus closes doors of churches when He pleases to do so. When churches become obstinate to His will, He closes their doors. He may close a door out of protection for the Church. He works to will and do of His own pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

We have a shut door in Acts 16:6-7:

***"And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia."***

And an open door in 2 Corinthians 2:12:

***"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord..."***

- The property at 100<sup>th</sup> and Wadsworth
- APEX
- The Story

So Jesus says opportunity exists, but what about having the strength or power to walk through those doors. The second half of verse 8 says "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." What does it mean to be a church of little power? Is that 4Cs too?

#### ***A Church of Little Power***

- ***"a little power" (strength)***  
Even though they have but little power or strength, they will be able to avail themselves of the door since Christ ensures it remains open. Some believe this should be translated without the indefinite article, "little strength" as an indication of weakness rather than power. It seems that Jesus is commending them for their 'weakness' in the world but commending them for their 'strength' in Christ. The ministry of the church at Philadelphia would be all the more effective because the strength their accomplishments would be undeniably of God. As Paul said of himself in weakness, ***"I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength."*** (Philippians 4:13).
- ***"kept My word"***  
The church at Philadelphia had faithfully kept His word. They had preserved its meaning and applied it to their own lives. It is by keeping his word—and the commandments that His word demands of us—that the Philadelphian church *demonstrated* the depth of their love for Him. Jesus said it Himself; ***"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."*** (John 14:21-24).
- ***"not denied My name"***  
They had not denied Him by their words or through their actions. Revelation 3:10 indicated that they were true to the truth of "Patient Endurance." They spoke patient endurance and they lived patient endurance.

#### ***Revelation 3:10***

Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

#### ***The Reward—The promise of protection and honor***

##### ***"Keep you from the hour of trial"***

An early teaching from the Didache alludes to this passage and takes it in a global sense:

*For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and "will perform signs and wonders," and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before. (5) Then **all humankind will come to the fiery test, and "many will fall away" and perish.***

**"I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it"**

This is perhaps the most precious promise among all the promises given the overcomer. For this phrase relates to *fellowship with God!* The entire message of Scripture, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, can be found within this pregnant phrase. To the overcomer in Philadelphia is the promise of the fulfillment of that *first love* so lacking in Ephesus, to walk once again in full fellowship with God like was enjoyed in the garden before all hell broke loose.

**Revelation 3:11-12**

I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 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.

**An Abiding Comfort—"I am coming soon!"**

"Be continually holding fast!" - the *present tense imperative*. We have our part to play, but it mostly looks like standing in a storm or breaking waves – patiently enduring. Will you patiently endure with me - to the Glory of the King?

**Revelation 22:20-21**

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with us all. Amen.