

# Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Study 21

*Rev 3:8-11a*

*8 I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*

*9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie-- indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.*

*10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

*11 Behold, I am coming quickly!*

Out of the six aspects of the letter to the church in Philadelphia we have already looked at the first three:

**The Correspondent**  
**The Church**  
**The City**

We will now study the last 3:

**The Commendation**  
**The Command**  
**The Counsel**

### THE COMMENDATION

Finding nothing in their **deeds** that caused Him concern, the Lord Jesus Christ moved on to commend the Christians at Philadelphia for four realities that characterized the congregation.

**1<sup>st</sup>** the Philadelphia church had **a little power**. That is not a negative comment on their feebleness, but a commendation of their strength; the Philadelphia church was small in numbers

*Luke 12:32*

*32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

But they had a powerful impact on its city.

Most of its members may have been poor, from the lowest classes of society

*1 Cor 1:26*

*26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*

But with Paul they could say,

*2 Cor 12:10*

*10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Despite its small size, spiritual power flowed in the Philadelphia church. People were being redeemed, lives were being transformed, and the gospel of Jesus Christ was being proclaimed.

2<sup>nd</sup> The believers at Philadelphia were also marked by obedience; they **kept** Christ's **word**.

Like Job, they could say, *"I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food," Job 23:12*

Like Martin Luther, on trial before the imperial Diet, they could say, *"My conscience is captive to the Word of God."*

They did not deviate from the pattern of obedience, thus proving the genuineness of their love for Christ

*John 14:21-24*

*23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

*24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.*

*John 15:13-14*

*13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

*14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*

3<sup>rd</sup> Christ further commended the Philadelphia congregation for having **not denied** His **name**, despite the pressures they faced to do so.

They remained loyal no matter what it cost them.

We have a description of the perseverance of believers in:

*Rev 14:12*

*12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

These are those who refused to take the mark of the beast, the tribulation Saints. Faithful to death.

And like them the Philadelphia church would not recant its faith.

4<sup>th</sup> Finally Christ commended the Philadelphia church **because** its members had **kept the word of** His **perseverance**.

The New International Version's translation clarifies Christ's meaning:

*"You have kept my command to endure patiently."*

The Christians at Philadelphia persevered faithfully through all of their trials and difficulties.

The steadfast endurance that marked Jesus' earthly life is to be a model for all Christians.

*Heb 12:2-4*

*2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

*4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

To the Thessalonians Paul wrote:

*2 Thess 3:5*

*5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.*

Both Christ's command and example should motivate Christians to patient endurance.

Indeed, endurance is an essential aspect of saving faith

*Matt 10:22*

*22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*

Because of its faithfulness, the Lord Jesus Christ made the Philadelphia church some astounding promises.

**A. He put before them an open door which no one can shut.**

Their salvation was secure; their entrance both into the blessings of salvation by grace and into Christ's future messianic kingdom was guaranteed.

The Picture of Christ's opening a door also symbolizes His giving the faithful Philadelphia church opportunities for service.

Elsewhere in Scripture an open door depicts freedom to proclaim the gospel. Explaining his travel plans to the Corinthians, Paul informed them, *"I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries"* 1 Cor 16:8-9

In his second letter the them he wrote:

*2 Cor 2:12*

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

To the Colossians Paul wrote:

*Col 4:2-3*

*2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;*

*3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,*

*4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

Philadelphia's strategic location provided the Christians at Philadelphia with an excellent opportunity to spread the gospel.

**B.** Verse 9 records a second promise made by Jesus Christ to the Philadelphia church:

*Rev 3:9*

*9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.*

As was the case with Smyrna (*Rev 2:9*), Christians in Philadelphia faced hostility from unbelieving Jews.

Ingatius later debated some hostile Jews during his visit to Philadelphia.

Because of their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, they were not a synagogue of God, but a **synagogue of Satan**.

Though they claimed **that they were Jews**, that claim was a lie.

Racially, culturally, and ceremonially they were Jews, but spiritually they were not.

Paul defines a true Jew in Romans:

*Rom 2:28-29*

*28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;*

*29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

*Rom 9:6-7*

*6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,*

*7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."*

Amazingly, Christ promised that some of the very Jews who were persecuting the Christians at Philadelphia would **come and bow down at their feet, and know that** God had **loved** them.

Bowing at someone's feet depicts abject, total defeat and submission.

The Philadelphia church's enemies would be utterly vanquished, humbled, and defeated.

This imagery derived from the Old Testament, which describes the yet future day when unbelieving Gentiles will bow down to the believing remnant of Israel.

*Isaiah 45:14*

*14 Thus says the LORD: "The labor of Egypt and merchandise of Cush And of the Sabeans, men of stature, Shall come over to you, and they shall be yours; They shall walk behind you,*

*They shall come over in chains; And they shall bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, 'Surely God is in you, And there is no other; There is no other God.' "*

*Isaiah 49:23*

*23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, And lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."*

*Isaiah 60:14*

*14 Also the sons of those who afflicted you Shall come bowing to you, And all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

The Philadelphia church's faithfulness would be rewarded by the salvation of some of the very Jews who were persecuting it.

Other faithful churches throughout history have also been enabled by the Lord to reach the Jewish people with the gospel of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

And the future day will come when "all Israel will be saved" Rom 11:26, when God will "pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn Zech 12:10

C. Verse 10 contains a final promise to the faithful Philadelphia church:

*Rev 3:10*

*10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

Because the believers in Philadelphia had successfully passed many tests, Jesus promised to spare them from the ultimate test.

The sweeping nature of that promise extends far beyond the Philadelphia congregation to encompass all faithful churches throughout history.

Notice now that there are several aspects of this wonderful promise.

- 1<sup>st</sup>. The Test is yet future
- 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Test is for a limited time
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. It is a test that will expose people for what they really are
- 4<sup>th</sup>. The Test is worldwide in scope
- 5<sup>th</sup>. Its purpose is to test those who dwell on earth, a term used as a technical term in the book of Revelation for unbelievers

This **hour of testing** is Daniel's Seventieth Week (*Dan 9:25-27*)

It is the time of Jacob's trouble (*Jer 30:7*)

It is the seven-year tribulation period. (*Revelation*)

Unbelievers will either pass the test by repenting, or fail it by refusing to repent.

Those who repent and pass the test are described in (*Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-10, 14; 14:4 and 17:14*)

Those who fail to repent and fail the test are described in (*6:15-17; 9:20; 16:11; and 19:17-18*)

## THE COMMAND

*Rev 3:11b*

*“hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”*

Because of the Lord’s imminent return for His church, believers must **hold fast what they have**.

The members of the Philadelphia church had been faithful and loyal to Christ; He commanded them to remain so.

Those who persevere to the end thereby prove the genuineness of their salvation

*Matt 10:22; 24:13*

*22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*

*13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved*

It is true that believers are eternally secure because of the power of God.

Yet the means by which He secures them is by providing believers with a persevering faith.

Christians are saved by God’s power, but not apart from their constant, undying faith.

Paul writes in:

*Col 1:22-23*

*22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight--*

*23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Those who abandon their faith reveal that they were never truly saved to begin with

*1 John 2:19*

*19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*

Christ’s promise to the one who faithfully perseveres is: *“no one will take your crown” James 1:12*

*Revelation 2:10* defines this **crown** as the *“crown of life”* or as the Greek text literally reads, *“the crown which is life.”*

The *“crown”* or reward for those who faithfully endure to the end is eternal life with all its attendant rewards

2 John 1:8

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

2 Tim 4:8

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

1 Pet 5:4

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

In our glorified state, we will be perfectly righteous, and thus perfectly able to reflect God's glory. Those whose faithful perseverance marks them as true children of God never need fear losing their salvation.

## THE COUNSEL

Rev 3:12-13

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 I will write on him My new name.

13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

As He concluded the letter to the faithful church at Philadelphia, Christ promised four eternal blessing to the one **who overcomes** (another name for a Christian: 1 John 5:5).

1<sup>st</sup> Is that Christ **will make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he will not go out from it anymore.**

A **pillar** represents stability, permanence, and immovability.

Pillars can also represent honor; in pagan temples they were often carved in such a way as to honor a particular deity.

The marvelous promise Christ makes to believers is that they will have an eternal place of honor **in the temple of God** (heaven). To people used to fleeing their city because of earthquakes and enemies, the promise that they **will not go out from** heaven was understood as security in eternal glory.

2<sup>nd</sup> Christ's second promise to the one who overcomes is that He will **write on him the name of His God.** That depicts ownership, signifying that all true Christians belong to God. It also speaks of the intimate personal relationship we have with Him forever.

3<sup>rd</sup> Thirdly Christ promises to write on believers **the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.** Christians have eternal citizenship in heaven's capital **city, the new Jerusalem,** described at length in *Rev 21*. That is yet another promise of security, safety, and glory.

4<sup>th</sup> Finally, Christ promises believers His **new name.** Christ's name represents the fullness of His person.

In heaven, believers will “*see Him just as He is*” 1 John 3:2, and whatever we may have known of Him will pale in the reality in which we will then see Him. The **new name** by which we will be privileged to call Him will reflect that glorious revelation of His person.

The exhortation **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches** closes all seven letters.

Believers must heed the truths found in each letter, since the seven churches represent the types of churches that have existed throughout history.

The letter to the faithful Philadelphia church reveals that the holy, true, sovereign, omnipotent God pours out His blessing on churches that remain loyal to Him.

He will bless them with open doors for evangelism, eternal salvation, kingdom blessings, and deliverance from the great time of testing that will come on the earth.

He will ultimately bring all those who persevere in their faith to the eternal bliss of heaven, where He will reveal Himself fully to them.

The promise of those rich blessings should motivate every church and every Christian to follow the Philadelphia church’s example of faithfulness.