

*“I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have,
so that no one may seize your crown” (Rev 3:11).*

SEVEN CHURCHES

- *“I am coming soon...”*

I. MESSIAH’S MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

A. LETTER TO EPHESUS 2:1-7

B. Letter to Smyrna 2:8-11

C. LETTER TO PERGAMUM 2:12-17

D. LETTER TO THYATIRA 2:18-29

E. LETTER TO SARDIS 3:1-6

F. LETTER TO PHILADELPHIA 3:7-13

1. The Church at Philadelphia

Philadelphia was about twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis.

King Attalus III in honor of his brother named the city Philadelphia, meaning “brotherly love.”

It was liable to severe earthquakes hence many of its inhabitants lived outside the city limits.

Though many gods were worshiped, the primary deity was Dionysus, the god of fertility, wine, and drama; Bacchus.

The remains of early Christian times are more numerous here than in any other of the seven of the Apocalypse.

2. Salutation to the Angel at Philadelphia:

For the first time in the salutations to the churches Christ Messiah does not refer back to the description in Revelation 1.

To the church at Philadelphia He presents His distinctively appropriate attribute as Head of the Church.

First, He emphasizes His own unique attributes of absolute Holiness and Truth. What He does is

Right and what He says is True. *“For the Word of the LORD is right; and all His works are done in truth”* (Ps 33:4). Truth and holiness mark His pathway that leads to the Father of Lights.

Second, to the church at Philadelphia He reveals that He has the key of David; that He opens the doors of witness and service that no man can shut and the doors He shuts no man can open.

The reference to Isaiah 22:22 is seen in accordance with the Scriptural principle a natural before a spiritual, a first before a second: *“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.” The promise was to Eliakim, the high official and faithful servant under King Hezekiah. Eliakim under the King would be responsible—the government, like the heavy key-chain hanging from his shoulder, was to be upon him. The same prophetic promise is given to the coming Messiah the King of Israel in Isaiah 9:6,-7. The government was to be upon His shoulder and He would occupy the throne of the house of David forever.

3. Commendation:

The Philadelphia letter contains four commendations:

- a) verse 8 seems to imply they were using the opportunities afforded by the open door set before them.

- b) Their little strength becomes their area of commendation. It may relate to the few in number who were counted faithful to the One who called them or it may connect to 2 Cor 12:9-10, *“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Cor 12:9-10).
- c) They are commended for keeping His Word and
- d) Being separated from evil to being faithful to Him.

4. Correction:

Like Smyrna, Christ Messiah did not issue any correction(s) to the church at Philadelphia.

5. Admonition:

In verse 11 the Philadelphians were admonished to remember that Jesus Messiah will come quickly therefore they are to *hold fast,(2:13, 25; 3:11) to be steadfast holding to the truth.* Dr. Ryrie comments, “If one moves from their position on Truth, they can lose the crown they may have won. Notice the word is not that anyone would take their salvation, but their crown. A faithless servant can lose his crown, but not eternal life (I Cor 3:14-15). Mismanaged gifts, devotion and opportunities can result in the loss of a crown earned.”

6. Reward:

Four rewards are promised to the Overcomers at Philadelphia:

- *Their enemies will be humbled before them (v. 9).* As at Smyrna, Satan again marshals his old attacks. He seeks to infect with legalism. It is the Judaic system in opposition to the truth of grace. Dr. Feinberg states, *“This (Legalism) is not true Old Testament theology.”*
- *They will be kept from great tribulation that is coming upon the whole earth (v.10).*
- *Believers will be honored (v. 12)* Dr. Ryrie states, “The promise that believers will be pillars may allude to the custom in Philadelphia of honoring a magistrate or philanthropist by placing a great pillar with his name inscribed on it in one of the temples. Believers will be so honored in the temple of God and permanently so (*‘they will not go out from it any more.’* ”
- *Saints will have our Father’s Name, the name of His city and Christ’s new name (v. 12).*

We do not know what the new name is but the writing of His name indicates identification with the Almighty One.

II. MESSIAH’S REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

OVERCOMER	MESSIAH’S MILLENNIAL REIGN	AGE TO COME
Ephesus - Rev. 2:1	Holding Seven Stars Walking Among the Church	Rev. 2:1
Smyrna - Rev. 2:8	First and Last; Dead and Alive Forevermore	Rev. 2:8
Pergamum - Rev. 2:12	Two-edged Sword	Rev. 2:12
Thyatira - Rev. 2:18	Eyes like a flame / feet like burnished bronze	Rev. 2:18
Sardis - Rev. 3:1	Seven Spirits and Seven Stars	Rev. 3:1
Philadelphia - Rev. 3:7	Key of David	Rev.3:7
Laodicea - Rev. 3:14		

III. MESSIAH’S CORRECTIONS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

OVERCOMER	MESSIAH’S MILLENNIAL REIGN	AGE TO COME
Ephesus - Rev. 2:1	You have forsaken the love you had at first	Rev. 2:4
Smyrna - Rev. 2:8	No Correction (Failed to repent for Ephesus’ correction).	(Rev. 2:4)
Pergamum - Rev. 2:12	Doctrinre of Balaam & Teaching of Nicolaitans	Rev. 2:14-15
Thyatira - Rev. 2:18	Tolerating the spirit / teaching of Jezebel	Rev. 2:20-23
Sardis - Rev. 3:1	Dead, need to wake-up	Rev. 3:1-3
Philadelphia - Rev. 3:7	No Correction ((Failed to repent for Ephesus’ correction).	(Rev.2:4)
Laodicea - Rev. 3:14		

IV. REWARDS FOR OVERCOMERS

OVERCOMER	MESSIAH’S MILLENNIAL REIGN	AGE TO COME
Ephesus - Rev. 2:7	Eat of the Tree of Life	Rev. 22:2
Smyrna - Rev. 2:11	Receive Crown of Life, Escape second death	Rev. 20:6
Pergamum - Rev. 2:17	Eat hidden manna, receive white stone, new name	Rev. 22:4
Thyatira - Rev. 2:28	Authority over nations, Morning Star	Rev. 22:16
Sardis - Rev. 3:5	White Garments, Name in Book of Life	Rev. 19:8
Philadelphia - Rev. 3:12	Escape Tribulation, be pillar in Temple, New name Jerusalem	Rev.22:2
Laodicea - Rev. 3:21		

V. THE SEVEN CHURCHES HISTORICALLY PARALLEL THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE CHRUCH AGE

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT	ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY	PERIOD IN CHURCH HISTORY
1. EPHESUS (2:1-7) REPRESENTS LEADERSHIP: JEWISH TO APPROX. 65 A.D.;	APOSTOLIC AGE	30 - 100 A.D.
2. SMYRNA (2:8-11) REPRESENTS	PERSECUTION AGE	100 - 313 A.D.
3. PERGAMUM (2:12-17) REPRESENTS CONSTANTINIAN ERA	IMPERIAL AGE	313 - 606 A.D.
4. THYATIRA	PAPACY AGE	590 - 1517 A.D.
5. SARDIS	REFORMATION AGE	1517 - 1730 A.D.
6. PHILADELPHIA	MISSIONARY AGE	1730 - 1900 A.D.
5. LAODICEA		