

See the Open Door • Rev. 3:7-13

## INTRODUCTION – Read vs. / Philadelphia **Keys**

1. Jesus' words to this church are again stuffed w/hints He knew all about where they lived.
2. Philadelphia was called **The Doorway to the East** because it straddled the main highway that stretched from the major port of Troas in the West, all the way to the India.
  - a. It was the meeting place of 3 important regions there in Western Asia Minor.
  - b. The main roads that reached into these commercially rich regions all met up in Philadelphia.
  - c. Because it was so strategically located, in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> C BC, the Greeks made it a colony for spreading their culture into those regions.
  - d. It fulfilled its mission, bringing Greek religion, philosophy, government, art & language to all Asia Minor.
3. Despite Philadelphia's amazing potential as a commercial & cultural center, it had one well-known drawback = **Earthquakes**.
  - a. The region was geologically unstable.
  - b. While things have since settled down, 2000 years ago, Philadelphia saw **a lot** of quakes.
  - c. 2 of them, in 17 & 37 AD **leveled** the city.
    - 1) The aftershocks went on for years.
    - 2) They didn't have the construction codes or materials we do today.
    - 3) So, portions of the city were forever collapsing.
    - 4) The historian **Strabo** reports that every wall in Philadelphia had cracks & people were constantly being injured or killed by falling masonry.
  - d. We'll see how this plays into Jesus' message later.
4. Living in SoCal, we can relate to Philadelphia.
  - a. **This** is a cultural & commercial center **for the entire world**.
  - b. Hollywood & LA have had a HUGE impact on the shape of modern society, not just here in the US, but around the world.
  - c. And, we're not unaccustomed to the ground moving beneath our feet. We have regular shakers.
    - 1) Tourists & out of State visitors to SoCal **freak out!** when we have an earthquake.
    - 2) But they are **just as** unnerved by the **casual way** SoCal natives react! "Ho-hum."
    - 3) It's become a **part** of living here; the price for the weather & amenities of the 805.
  - d. Other parts of the country think we're **insane** for living here.
  - e. But **we** know: **THEY** are the crazies for living where there are tornados or hurricanes, constant humidity, or death by sheer boredom!
5. There really are some interesting parallels between Philadelphia & where we live.
6. So let's see what Jesus has to say to this church.

V7

<sup>7</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "*He who has the key of David*, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

1. As we read Jesus' description of Himself here, some of you notice a difference from the other letters.
  - a. In the previous 5 ltrs we've looked at Jesus lifts a part of the vision John had of Him in His glory in ch1.
  - b. What He says here **isn't** from that.
  - c. While Jesus is certain holy & true, those titles aren't ascribed to Him in ch1.
  - d. And while He **does** have keys in ch1, they're different from **this** key.
    - 1) In ch1, Jesus has the keys of death & hades.
    - 2) **THIS** is the key of David.
2. So, what's going on here? Why the change up?
  - a. In the last ltr, Jesus goes back to the pattern & describes Himself using terms drawn from ch1.
  - b. So why the difference here?
  - c. The reason is because ... I have no idea! Not a clue.
    - 1) And I haven't found a single commentator that even **attempts** an answer.
    - 2) There probably are some, but I haven't read any.

3. But we know from the other letters Jesus describes Himself the way He does because it spoke to their spiritual condition.

- a. That has to apply here as well. So Jesus says He's **HOLY**.
    - 1) That was an important reminder to the Christians in Philadelphia who faced a daily battle with immense temptation.
    - 2) Their city was a hotbed of a culture that made sin **easy** & guilt-free.
    - 3) There were dozens of pagan temples where being religious **meant** being immoral.
    - 4) Their marketplace was filled with extravagant luxuries that made life all about **pleasure**.
    - 5) **Success** was defined by what neighborhood you lived in, what your house looked like, the clothes you wore, & the people you hung out with.
    - 6) So, Jesus reminds His people He's holy.
      - a) If they follow Him, they'll need to **step out** of all that
      - b) To identify themselves by a whole new set of priorities & values.
      - c) They can't belong to Him and the World at the same time.
  - b. He also says He's **TRUE**.
    - 1) There are 2 words for "true" in Greek.
      - a) 1 means factual, the other means real / genuine.
      - b) That's the word here.
    - 2) Jesus is the Real-Deal; the Genuine Article.
    - 3) Listen: Jesus isn't just an historical figure; some guy who lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> C who came along with an agenda for social reform.
    - 4) Jesus is God come as Man to fix the mess Adam got us.
    - 5) He is both the origin and goal of EVERYTHING!
    - 6) Christians often get accused by **scoffers** of "Living in a fantasy."
      - a) That's exactly backwards.
      - b) It's the unbeliever who's living the fiction.
      - c) The person who believes in Jesus & walks in the Spirit is smack-dab in the center of reality.
      - d) And THAT'S why they sense so strongly something is very wrong with this world!
      - e) They are living right-side up in an upside down world.
4. Then Jesus says He holds **the key of David**.
- a. That's a nod to Isaiah 22 & an interesting story of corruption & reform.
  - b. King Hezekiah had a royal treasurer named **Shebna** who abused his office.
  - c. So the key to the treasury was taken from him & given to a faithful servant named **Eliakim**.
  - d. The prophet Isaiah foretold all this, & used Eliakim's faithfulness as a template for describing how the Messiah would come & restore the glories of David's throne.
  - e. He would have all the authority of a king to rule – represented here by a **key**.
  - f. These are **MY** keys. They open doors.
    - 1) I have them, because **I have the authority** to open & close the doors they go to.
    - 2) If I give these keys **to you**, I'm granting **you** authority to open & close those doors.
  - g. When Jesus says He **HAS** the key of David, it means He **owns** & has possession of it.
    - 1) It's HIS! He didn't **borrow** it; it's not on **loan**. He doesn't have to **give it back**.
    - 2) So When He opens a door, no one can shut it. The door He shuts, can't be opened.
  - h. Jesus' authority is unimpeachable.

V8

<sup>8</sup> "I know your works.

1. If you've been with us for the previous 5 letters, you know Jesus says this then gives a commendation for what they're doing well, followed by correction where they've gotten off track.
2. But last week, w/His message to the church at Sardis, there was **nothing to commend**; it's all correction.
3. With this church, it's the opposite; there's **nothing to correct**.
4. He begins with a promise . . .  
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.
5. Archaeology & history tell us next to nothing about the church in Philadelphia.

- a. All we know is gleaned from these words.
  - b. What Jesus says here suggests this was a small church of modest means.
  - c. While He commends their faithfulness, He acknowledges it as little.
  - d. They weren't a megachurch.
  - e. They didn't have a large slice Philadelphian elite as members.
  - f. Their budget was small; their resources meager.
6. And though they didn't have much, **they had Jesus** & clung to Him for all they were worth.
7. Jesus' commendation implies they'd been through some rough times.
- a. They'd faced persecution but had **not denied** His name.
  - b. They'd been troubled by the false teaching we've seen in other churches, but **kept** Jesus' Word.
8. Because of their faithfulness, Jesus says  
See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;
9. The Philadelphians would have connected w/this because their city was known as the "Doorway to the East."
- a. Its original mission was to be a launch point for Greek culture into all Asia Minor.
  - b. Jesus means the same for the church there.
  - c. Their reward for past faithfulness was more opportunity.
  - d. They were to spread the **counter-culture** of God's Kingdom.
10. Let's imagine ourselves sitting in that little church in Philadelphia.
- a. Life's been difficult because walking with Jesus means not fitting into the decadent society everyone else lives by.
  - b. Despite not being popular, people still hear the Gospel faithfully shared by members of the church, and every few weeks, a couple more people come to faith and join the church.
  - c. Still, being a Christian isn't getting us any kudos from the rest of the City.
  - d. Then one day the pastor says he's received a letter from Jesus, dictated to the well-known Apostle John – one of the original disciples.
  - e. That letter is addressed specifically to our church. // The Pastor reads,  
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.
  - f. Jesus knows about what we've endured & how we've weathered the storms for His sake.
  - g. So, He's opened **more opportunity** to us.
  - h. But we're little; even He says so! **HOW** are we going to take advantage of that opportunity?
  - i. Don't we need to be bigger, smarter, & richer?
11. The answer to that is No!
- a. All they need is Jesus and an open door.
  - b. That's why Jesus says  
See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it
- 1) The first thing they need to do is to SEE what God has done; the opportunity He's given them.
  - 2) They need to **get a vision** for what He wants them to do.
  - 3) Then He tells them no one can gainsay or stand in the way of what He's opened for & to them.  
NO ONE!
  - c. That's ALL they need: Jesus & opportunity. They have BOTH.
12. Calvary, Please hear me. What Jesus said to them, the Spirit says to us today! V13 –  
"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
13. God has called you and I to live at this time, in this place, for His purpose.
- a. The end hasn't come yet, which means there are lost more people who need to come to faith in Jesus.
  - b. There are a lot more lives to rescue from the clutches of the devil.
  - c. There's a lot more trapped in his wretched lives who are being shredded by sin, sacrificed to sorrow.
  - d. There are empty seats that need to be filled.
14. We've been in this community for over 33 yrs & have faithfully loved & served Jesus.
- a. We've seen His Spirit save & restore many.
  - b. God has given us a **clear vision** for a church of 2000 adults & a high school of 500 students.
  - c. We need btwn 12-15 acres for that. // And as we consider it, **we feel our smallness**.

- d. I ***totally relate*** to the Philadelphians “little strength.”
15. So we NEED to hear these words from Jesus, reminding us of the opportunity He’s set before us.
  - a. There’s nothing MORE that we ***need*** if we have Him & the opportunities He’s given.
  - b. And we do!
  - c. The key is to do the one thing Jesus says to do here SEE!
16. Don’t see buildings & parking lots. See PEOPLE transformed by the Spirit of God.
  - a. See a city buzzing with talk about the amazing thing happening in its midst.
  - b. See cars that have peeled off their profane stickers and all have church stickers on them.
  - c. See people gathering in small groups at Starbucks praying or doing Bible studies.
  - d. The buildings of our new campus are just ***where*** we meet to be transformed by God’s Spirit & Word. So, don’t see the where so much as ***WHAT*** happens there.
17. In John 4:35 Jesus said to His disciples,  
Do you not say, ‘There are still 4 months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!
18. God wants us to get a vision for what He wants to do: Save the Lost & Grow the Saved.

Vs9-10

- <sup>9</sup> 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.
1. We learned about this synagogue of Satan in the letter to Smyrna.
  2. These were Jews who rejected the Gospel & stirred up trouble for believers.
  3. Jesus makes it clear being a ***true*** Jew isn’t about ancestry; it’s about Faith.
  4. And the day will come when these ***physical*** descendants of Abraham who’ve persecuted Christians will realize those Christians were far more faithful to God’s covenant than they were.
- <sup>10</sup> 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.
5. I’m going to reserve comment on that v. for later.
    - a. Next Sunday we’ll take a look at the 7 & last letter to the Church at Laodicea.
    - b. The following week, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> Pastor Sandy Adams from CC Stone Mountain Georgia will be here.
    - c. So on the 22<sup>nd</sup> we’ll return to this v 7 take an in-depth look at why we believe in a pre-tribulation rapture.

V11

- <sup>11</sup> Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.
1. That word quick doesn’t mean “soon” it means ***suddenly***.
  2. It’s a reminder Jesus’ return will occur ***in a moment of time***.
    - a. It’s not some slow emergence over a long time.
    - b. The Return of Christ is a ***crisis***, not a ***process***.
  3. Because they have no idea WHEN that will be, they need to always be ready.
  4. So He calls them to hang on to what they have. What’s that? ***JESUS!***
  5. If they hang on to Him to the end They WIN!
  6. That word “crown” is *stephanos* and meant the victory crown.
    - a. The ring of laurel leaves given to the victorious athlete.
  7. Contrary to all the hype, ***The Big Game*** isn’t in Phoenix today btwn the Patriots & Seahawks.
  8. We’re in The Big Game and the universe is the stadium.
  9. On one side is God’s Team, on the other the devil’s.
    - a. Jesus has already scored the winning goal.
    - b. We’re just waiting for the clock to run out.

V12

- <sup>12</sup> He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.
1. As we saw earlier, Philadelphia was plagued by daily earthquakes.
  2. Though the shakers of 17 & 37 AD leveled the city, they rebuilt.
  3. Whenever an aftershock hit, people ran outside lest the roof collapse on them.
  4. Jesus promises His faithful ones while they are used to Earthquakes, there are no Heaven-quakes.

5. They'll stand straight & tall in the presence of God & fear will be no more.  
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.
6. Archaeologists have found pillars from temples in the ruins of ancient Philadelphia.
  - a. They're inscribed with the names of priests & benefactors.
  - b. In heaven, we will be the pillars, & the name we'll bear is God's very own.
7. Sports fans love to wear their favorite team's jersey, cap or jacket.
  - a. It has the name of the team, sometimes the city, or a player's name and number.
  - b. LA Dodgers – Kershaw / 22
8. Not sure exactly HOW God's going to do this, but it's like . . .
  - a. When we cross the threshold of heaven, He'll hand us a jersey that says "New Jerusalem."
  - b. And it has God's Name on it because we belong to Him. We're on His team.
9. Finally, Jesus will give us **His** new name.
  - a. Remember a few weeks back we looked at the promise of **OUR** new name in 2:17
  - b. We're not the only ones who get new names; so does Jesus.
  - c. When this whole scene is wrapped up, God's got something new in store.
  - d. Jesus' work in securing Himself a bride will be complete.
  - e. The Bible doesn't tell us what's coming next.
  - f. That's a whole brand-new glorious story we'll have all eternity to enjoy.
  - g. But the point is: We'll be Jesus' partner in it – whatever it is.
10. Get this: We are His betrothed Bride.
  - a. Soon, He's coming for us to take us into the wedding.
  - b. We'll get new names befitting our true identity.
  - c. **TO** that new name individual to each of us is added Jesus new name.
  - d. We are the bride who take her beloved's name – because we are one.