

Revelation 3:7-13
 The Church of Philadelphia
 The Faithful Church
 Study 13

The Church in Philadelphia.

- The 6th church in our study through the churches of revelation
 - And as we've covered several times, all 7 churches were literal churches –
 - Meaning, they existed at the time of John's writing to them
- We can also apply them in our understanding a "representative" churches
 - They were hand selected by Jesus to be examples of kinds of churches
 - And throughout church history, we can see these types of churches
 - And even today we see these types churches existing among us
- That means that today there is an Ephesian church that loves doctrine, loves defending the faith – but is sadly missing the priority of their first love Jesus.
 - We can also see churches like Pergamos who have become corrupt from within
 - And churches like Sardis that are dead to God.
 - All seven churches are types of churches we can still see today

And I believe Jesus chose these specific churches so that you and I can learn from them

- And to be able to apply their lessons to our own lives
 - What is thought provoking is that when we read each letter we discover that Jesus chastises each of them.
 - Every church, as we've seen, has been condemned or criticized for sin in the church
- Every church except two of them: Smyrna from chapter 2 verse 8 who was heavily persecuted
 - And then our church this morning: the church in Philadelphia

Philadelphia and Smyrna stand as the minority amongst the churches as they alone have not been called out by Jesus for their sins

- They alone have been labeled faithful.

- This isn't to say that they didn't sin – that, of course, would be a preposterous thought
- Certainly there is no such thing as the perfect church full of people without struggle or fleshly weaknesses
 - But the church in Philadelphia was likely quick to deal with the sin when it presented itself
 - Consistently keeping their relationship with Jesus principal in their lives
- This may also be a telling commentary on the state of the church as a whole
 - As two out of seven is not a very high percentage of godliness
 - And think of the possible applications to the individual Christian level as well

With our church this morning, however, we find a sweet fellowship of believers.

- We see a church that has remained faithful to the Lord.
 - A church that remained loyal and obedient to His word
 - And for such, they received no warning, no corrections, no fearful judgments befalling them
- So we would be good to learn as much as we can from their example
 - To be a model of a church corporately, and a dependent Christian individually
 - The Philadelphian church is as good a representation of a true church as it gets

7 “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”’: **8** “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;[d] 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,[e] I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. **12** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out 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. **13** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

Jesus opens, as He does with all His letters, with a description of who He is.

- And attribute of His character that corresponds to the church in which He is writing to
 - With Philadelphia, He begins with two descriptions of His character that speak to His nature and being
 - And then couples that with a statement regarding His authority
 - Basically, He tells them Who He is and What He does
 - 7 “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”:
- His two opening descriptions – being holy and true – could fill volumes of books in exploring the depths of these
 - As truly they are unique to God alone
 - There is no one like Jesus – there is none like God
 - He alone is holy and He alone is true
- His character is without flaw; His being is without blemish; He is morally perfect in every way
 - And He is genuine reality. He is true. By way of contrast, all others are found liars before Him
 - He is true to truth. He guards His church against false doctrine.
 - And we can count on Him to be true to His Word. He is truth itself
 - As He told Thomas in John 14:6 “6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”
- I liked this statement from someone: “Holy is *set apart*; true means *genuine* or *real*. In the context of the letter Jesus is reminding them and us that He was *set apart* from eternity past to come to earth as heaven’s missionary to show mankind what is *genuine* and *real* about God

Personally, “He is true” is one of my favorite attributes of Jesus.

- In a world full of lies and lying, to know that every word comes from Jesus is real. Is truth – it brings a real comfort and hope
 - To know that every action of Jesus has been done truthfully and without corruption

- And that I can read about them and mirror my life to them
 - It's such a stabilizing and steadying thought

Jesus is holy and true, and Jesus also describes Himself as: "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens"

- This is a statement of pure authority, but to really understand it we need to turn in our bibles to Isaiah 22
 - This key of David that Jesus has – what is it?
- In chapter 1:718 we read that Jesus has the keys to death and hades
 - And then here we read that Jesus has the keys of David
 - It would seem that Jesus holds a set of keys, as it were
 - So what is the key of David that Jesus speaks of here?

What's interesting is that some believe that these keys are theirs, in addition to being Jesus'.

- Some have tried to say that this key of David begins with the heart of David
 - That since David was a man after God's own heart, he was given the keys to the kingdom of Israel
 - Accordingly, those who also have a heart after God – those who have a heart that lines up with the heart of God
 - It is to those individuals that God is prepared to entrust they Key of David to
- And then by virtue of being entrusted this key
 - These are the ones to whom God desires to impart the same authority that David walked in,
 - To open doors that no one can shut, and shut doors that no one can open.
 - All we need to do is ask for this key and we will unlock the Christians true potential
- Is this really what Jesus is communicating here in Revelation 3?
 - That you and I can open doors that no one else can shut or shut doors that no one else could open?

The only other place in all scripture where we find reference to the Key of David is in Isaiah 22

- Isaiah 22: **15** Thus says the Lord God of hosts: "Go, proceed to this steward, To Shebna, who *is* over the house, *and say*:
 - Briefly, Shebna was a scribe and the steward over king Hezekiah's house - the 12th king of Judah and a good king

- Sheba was in a very high position in the kingdom with a place of honor and responsibility
 - But Sheba was wicked and sought his own glory in pride
 - These verses speak to his being ‘let go’ from his position
 - Verse **16** ‘What have you here, and whom have you here, That you have hewn a sepulcher here, As he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, Who carves a tomb for himself in a rock?
 - **17** Indeed, the Lord will throw you away violently, O mighty man, And will surely seize you. **18** He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; There you shall die, and there your glorious chariots *Shall be* the shame of your master’s house. **19** So I will drive you out of your office, And from your position he will pull you down.”

Verse 20 “Then it shall be in that day, That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah;

- **21** I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem And to the house of Judah.
 - **22** The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open. **23** I will fasten him *as* a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father’s house.”
- You can see immediately in verse 22 that Jesus is referencing His title in Revelation 3 with that of Isaiah 22
 - In Isaiah 22, we see that the corrupt courtier Shebna was stripped of his position and given to another
 - That ‘other’ is Eliakim – who’s name, incidentally, means ‘raised up by God’
- And because Eliakim was a servant of The Lord, the Lord would give him great authority
 - The “key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open”
 - This means that Eliakim would have access to the kingdom. To the government. To the storehouse of riches
 - And with that key, he would open up doors that otherwise could not be opened

- And with that key, he would lock door to remain locked
 - No one can oppose his authority

Eliakim is a picture of the coming Messiah – a ‘type’, as we call it, of Jesus!

- Which Jesus clearly connects Himself with in Revelation 3 (let’s turn back there)
 - When Jesus claims to be the One who has the key of David
 - He is claiming full and unopposed authority to the kingdom
- Does the phrase “I will lay upon his shoulder” ring a bell?
 - When the Lord says in Isaiah “key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder”
 - Does that remind you of something?
 - Isaiah 9:6 “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom”
 - In Isaiah’s day, the key of the king was given to the royal steward and fastened to his shoulder
 - It was a sign of the authority of the position and granted him access to the kingdom
- This key of David was laid upon Jesus’ shoulders – the symbol of and the access to the government was laid upon the shoulders of the Messiah
 - Which will ultimately be fulfilled in the Millennium when we see Jesus ruling the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 20)

So, back to Rev 3, when Jesus connects Himself to the prophetic words of Isaiah, He is claiming full authority of the kingdom of Heaven.

- And as such, He introduces Himself as the one who can unlock the treasure house of God
 - And by His sovereign authority and His sovereign power He can open up its riches to those whom He chooses.
 - He has the key to all the riches. And He will dispense them at His own discretion.
- Further than just the riches and blessings of heaven that He has authority over

- When we see this title in conjunction with the latter part that it is
 - “He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens” (v7)
 - This is a direction correlation to opening and shutting the door of David’s house.
 - That is, the kingdom itself.
- I think this is beautifully said by our Lord in John 14:6 “6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”
 - If we want access to the kingdom of heaven, it will only be through Him who has the authority and the keys.
 - Now, in the context of Revelation 3, this more accurately may be a reference to the Millennial Messianic kingdom
 - But, by implication, would also be true of the heavenly kingdom as we see in John 14.

So, Jesus begins His introduction to the faithful Philadelphian church by describing Himself in very unique language.

- He uniquely is holy; He uniquely is true;
 - And He uniquely holds the key of David
- He goes on to speak to the church, verse 8
 - 8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;
 - In the last church, the church in Laodicea, Jesus stands at a closed door knocking
 - In Philadelphia He Himself holds the door *open* such that *no one can shut it*
 - What a beautiful picture to behold

I find it interesting that verse 8 says “I know your works; SEE I have set before you...”

- See? Do you see?
 - Jesus is inviting this church to look at the opportunities He has given them.
 - Most believe these to be opportunities of ministry and service
 - To share with others the life changing message of gospel of Jesus

- Similar to what Paul references in Col. 4: 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”
 - 2 Cor 2: 12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord”

I think the take away for you and me is that there are many open doors for us and the Lord wants us be looking for them.

- The Lord said “See I have set before you and open door...”. Do we ourselves see?
 - I think this is a message for all of Christendom –
 - That He knows the works He has set before you to discover; and those works He has not set before you to pursue
 - The Lord has a path for you, a course, custom designed.
 - One of the ways He moves you along His course for your life is by opening and closing doors of opportunity
- And we would do well in trusting Him in it.
 - A man went to Spurgeon and said:
 - 'Mr. Spurgeon, I have it in my soul to win people to Christ. What shall I do?' Spurgeon asked, 'What is your job?' The man replied, 'I'm an engineer on the railroad.'
 - Spurgeon asked, 'Is your fireman a Christian?' The man replied, 'I don't know.'
 - Spurgeon responded: 'Then go back and find out and start with him”
 - Open doors and opportunities are there; we just need to be looking for them

But why would the Lord give these open doors to this Church?

- Verse 8 “ for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.
 - The word “for” is the word <hoti> and is best translated “because”
 - The literal translation of this verse “because you have little power and kept my word and not denied my name”
- The church is being given the reasons why the Lord opened a door for them.

- And so what the text actually says is, "I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut because you have little strength and have kept my word and not denied my name."

And I think this teaches us something very important.

- That an open door is given when a church fulfills the conditions that will allow it to move through that door once it's been opened.
 - And Jesus gives them, and us, three reasons why this church was chosen to have the open door
- First, they were dependent upon the Lord's strength.
 - "You have little strength"
 - I'm reminded of Paul's declaration in 2 Cor 12: 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 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,"
- Jesus works through people with little power,
 - because those that have little strength know that they can do nothing of themselves
 - And when they surrender and cry out to Jesus for strength
 - Then He performs the work and God gets all the glory
 - This is what Paul eludes to in 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us"
 - It's this little power , little strength, that made the church in Philadelphia suitable to be instruments of His power.

The second reason Jesus gives them is that they were dedicated to God's word:

- "You have kept my word"
 - They held on to it; preserved it; understood that they words of God are not to be taken for granted
 - They were loyal to God's word
- And thirdly – they were devoted to the Lord Himself
 - "You have not denied My name"

How simple all three of these are.

- Why did God use this church so mightily?
 - We think we need to be a mighty man of action and deed before the Lord would use us.
 - That we need to make something of ourselves to be used by God
- But these descriptions are so simplistic in a way:
 - They had little strength;
 - they were dependent upon His word
 - and devoted to His name

What a message for the church this morning

- Remember last week we talked about strengthening the things that remain
 - And how that is a call to get back to the basics of your faith
 - Here, the church in Philadelphia were so good in the basics and for that God used them mightily
 - Do you hear the Lord speaking to your spirit this morning?

We won't be able to finish the whole of the letter this morning because there is so much in front of us, but let's finish with verse

- **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.
 - This is the first of many promises the Lord finishes His letter with
 - Specifically, verse 10 is a verse has a great impact on believers
 - so next week I want to give it some time for development
- But here in verse 9 is the first promise given
 - It's the promise that God will honor us in the eyes of the unbelievers who have been hostile to us.
 - Look at verse 9 again “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”

Philadelphia had a lot of opposition and it seems a majority of the antagonism came from a large Jewish population who were against Christians

- Jesus calls them those that say they are Jews but are really of the synagogue of Satan
 - It's the same label He gives those that are persecuting the church in Thyatira in chapter 2 verse 9
 - I find it interesting how involved Satan is in religion.
- But these specific Jews were Jewish by blood. They were blood descendants of Abraham
 - But spiritually they were of their father the devil
- That's what Jesus called them in John chapter 8: **37** "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. **38** I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with[!] your father."
 - **39** They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. **40** But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. **41** You do the deeds of your father."
 - Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."
 - **42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. **43** Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. **44** You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. **45** But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. **46** Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? **47** He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

These are the first century Jews that hated Christ. They are the same 1st century Jews that hated the Christians

- And today it's no different. We will and do have people that hate us just simply because we are Christians
 - We see that sentiment happening all over the globe today

- But the promise of Jesus here is that one day He “will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you”
- Isn't this interesting?
 - Jesus is saying that one day, all the unbelievers that have been hostile
 - And resisting the gospel as we spread the good news
 - That God is going to make them come and bow down at our feet
 - And in doing so they will know in an instant that the Lord has loved us all along.

I don't know where that sits with you today?

- For me, I actually have a hard time with it.
 - I suppose if you don't but rather you are relishing in this, you may need to get right with the Lord today ☺
 - But this causes me a bit of discomfort
- But I try to put myself in the shoes of those in the middle east today
 - Those who genuinely know real suffering at the hands of hostile unbelievers
 - Who are being ridiculed and abused in ways that our western culture has never had to face
 - And in the here and now, they are being forced to get on their knees before their capturers
 - And being forced to recant their faith in Christ and most, so it seems,
 - Are simply being martyred because they refuse
- Well, as I read this, I take it that one day
 - Those that are doing such atrocities in the name of religion; in the name of idol worshiping
 - They will one day be brought low before those that they have abused and martyred.
 - And will be forced, by the sheer magnitude of God's glory I'm sure
 - To worship before the feet of those they mistreated

I'm sure that Jesus didn't mean to cause the unbeliers to worship the believers

- But when every knee is bowed and every tongue confesses before Jesus

- That in that day, those that have chosen not to follow Jesus will come to understand how important the love of Christ is
 - And will be, in that day, removed from God's presence forever
 - "Depart from me, for I never knew you

Interestingly, I also think this has to do with our part in the judging of the nations in the end

- Jesus, speaking to the 12 disciples in Matt 19:28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"
 - 1 Cor 6: 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels?...."
 - Aren't these interesting verses to consider

Jesus will honor them. Jesus will honor us.

- And the result of that honoring? – "they will know that I have loved you"
 - Isaiah 43:1 "But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; You *are* Mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. 3 For I *am* the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place. 4 Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life..