

The Church at Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

The True Church

Introduction: The letter to the church at Philadelphia represents the true church. It demonstrates to us what God intended for the church to be from the very beginning. It is a letter without a condemnation, as was the letter to the church at Smyrna (The Persecuted Church).

This letter represents the time period known in church history as the time of the Great Awakenings – the time when great Bible preaching and teaching was a driving force in world society – Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), one of America’s greatest preachers and theologians; John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of the Methodist church and one of England’s greatest sons of all time; George Whitefield (1714-1770), looked upon as perhaps the greatest public speaker since Simon Peter. It was the time of the great missionary movements of which we are still seeing fruit – William Carey (1761-1834), missionary to China; Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), missionary to Burma; David Livingston (1813-1873), missionary to Africa; and D.L. Moody (1837-1899), world-famous evangelist. The years represented would be those between 1700 and 1900, approximately.

The city of Philadelphia was built as a center of Greek culture around 200 BC. It is located some thirty miles southeast of Sardis. It was celebrated for its excellent wine which came from the grape orchards of the area. The city had a heavy Jewish population which made it difficult to work in as a

Christian. The city was destroyed several times by earthquakes. The city that stood when this passage was written had been rebuilt by Tiberius Caesar after an earthquake in 17 AD. It is known in modern times as Alasehir. It was named after a king of Pergamos, Attalus Philadelphus, who built the city.

This period is known as the period of the True Church. We call it that because of what this passage says concerning it.

I. THE TRUE CHURCH KNOWS WHO IS IN AUTHORITY OVER IT – VS. 7

Many of the problems churches had up to this point were those relating to who was in charge. The first message to the church at Philadelphia made it clear as to Who was in authority and it would appear that the church in Philadelphia accepted it as thus.

The church-age period under review here made the same decision. Of the problems in the churches at the time, one of them was not who was in authority – that seemed to have been settled. We can see today, however, that the authority problem is back and the church is on a downward slide. It's not a person in the church that we're speaking of, but Christ Himself. If we understand that He is the Head of the church and that the Pastor is the under-shepherd and that the chain-of-command goes from there, then we will be far less likely to have problems in our churches.

So, what about this authority figure represented here - what does it say about Him and what does that mean for us?

A. **He is holy**

1. Holy in His birth – Luke 1:35

Luk 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

2. Holy in His death – Acts 2:27

Act 2:27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

3. Holy in His present priestly office – Heb. 7:26

Heb 7:26 For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

4. If the Head of the church is Holy then we ought to be holy as well (1 Peter 1:15-16). The church during the Great Awakening days was perhaps the most holy in living of any church age. It was illustrated by holy living.

1Pe 1:15-16 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; **(16)** Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

B. **He is true**

1. The word for “true” here is one that indicates “Very true.” It is as close to a word meaning absolute truth as one can

get. In the attitude of opposites, this word for "true" means not erroneous, not false.

2. Put all that together, the One as the head of the church is absolute truth personified. If He said it, it is very true. John 17:17

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

C. He has the key of David

1. A key speaks of power and possession.
2. The reference to David is reference to the kingdom of David which Jesus Christ would control during the Millennium – Luke 1:32
Luk 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
3. For the church in Philadelphia, and for all the church age, it tells us that Jesus has the key to truth and holiness, as well as to opportunity, service and testimony and that he can open all or none to whom He will when He will.
4. It, therefore, speaks of the sovereignty of God

D. He opens and no one shuts

Once what Christ opens is open, unless He chooses otherwise, it stays open

E. He shuts and no one opens

Once what Christ shuts is shut, unless He

chooses otherwise, it stays shut.

Conclusion to point I: To look at the church at Philadelphia, and the churches represented by that letter during the Great Awakening, and to look at the church today, it's alarming. To be so close in time to those days, and then to consider how far we've gone as a church is disheartening. I know we can never go back, but it would be good to at least look back on those times and see if we can't duplicate at least a little of their holiness.

II. THE TRUE CHURCH KNOWS HOW TO WORK – VS.

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A. *They know how to recognize opportunity – “behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”*

1. The “open door” was specific to the church at Philadelphia in its time because of where the city was set. It provided the church there great opportunity to take the Gospel to the entire region.

The situation of the city fully explains this saying. Philadelphia lay at the upper extremity of a long valley, which opens back from the sea. After passing Philadelphia the road along this valley ascends to the Phrygian land and the great Central Plateau, the main mass of Asia Minor. This road was the one which led from the harbor of Smyrna to the northeastern parts of Asia Minor and the East in general, the one rival to the great route connecting Ephesus with the East, and the greatest Asian trade route of medieval times.

The Imperial Post Road from Rome to the

Provinces farther east and southeast coincided for some considerable distance with this trade route. Through Troas, Pergamum, Thyatira, it reached Sardis; and from thence it was identical with the trade route by Philadelphia up to the center of Phrygia. Along this great route the new influence was steadily moving eastwards from Philadelphia in the strong current of communication that set from Rome across Phrygia towards the distant East. As we have seen in..., it had not yet penetrated beyond the center of Phrygia into the northeast, so that there was abundant opportunity open before it.

Philadelphia, therefore, was the keeper of the gateway to the plateau; but the door had now been permanently opened before the Church, and the work of Philadelphia had been to go forth through the door and carry the gospel to the cities of the Phrygian land.

2. The term "open door" is one used in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul often enough to establish a definition – an open door means an opportunity for missionary work. 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3

1Co 16:9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.

2Co 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

Col 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

3. "And no man can shut" – until God's finished with the door of missionary opportunity it won't be shut. There is no power strong enough to shut something God wants open.
 - a) Christ is to be acknowledged as the author of all the liberty and opportunity his churches enjoy.
 - b) He takes notice and keeps account, how long he has preserved their spiritual liberties and privileges for them.
 - c) Wicked men envy the people of God their door of liberty, and would be glad to shut it against them.
 - d) If we do not provoke Christ to shut this door against us, men cannot do it.

B. *They're not concerned with size or resources – "for thou hast a little strength" – this has several things in mind:*

1. Very little political influence or authority – both the church and the city were pretty powerless to affect change on society on their own.
2. The church was small in size numerically and limited in external resources because of it. The blessings of the Lord on the church in Philadelphia, nor the opportunity it was given, were determined by its size in number but rather solely on the sovereign will of God. 1 Cor. 3:6-7; Ps.

127:1

1Co 3:6-7 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (7) So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Psa 127:1 **A Song of degrees for Solomon.** Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.

3. This can be seen as “a little grace” – although they were not known for their spiritual power, what they did have, albeit small in amount, was blessed of God. It shows that it’s not the quantity that matters but the quality and the power of God shows through. 2 Cor. 12:8-10

2Co 12:8-10 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. (9) And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

C. They know the Word of God and keep it without apology – “and hast kept my word”

Regardless of their size, they were faithful to the Word of God in keeping it in their heart, as well as obeying it in their lives. John 14:21-24; 17:6; 2 Tim. 4:7

Joh 14:21-24 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (22) Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? (23) Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (24) He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Joh 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

2Ti 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

D. *They're unashamed to name Christ as their Saviour, regardless of cost – "and hast not denied my name"*

1. This, as well as the preceding phrase, seems to point to some particular trial they were facing, or had already faced. They came through it, or were enduring it, without denying the name of Christ.
2. This, again, shows that, regardless of size, we are to remain faithful to the Lord and to the opportunity He has given us. Luke 12:8-9; 1 John 2:22-23

Luk 12:8-9 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: (9) But he that denieth me before

men shall be denied before the angels of God.

1Jn 2:22-23 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (23) Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

Conclusion to point II: The church at Philadelphia was given a great opportunity to take the Gospel to the world through the open door that was given to them. During the church age under observation in this letter - the True church period (AD 1700-1900) - the church was given a great opportunity of an open door to world evangelism - they took it and changed society. Whether or not that door is shut is not up to us. The application for us today is the same - take the opportunities that God gives us to give the Gospel out until the door closes.

III. THE TRUE CHURCH IS GOING TO HAVE ENEMIES – VS. 9

A. *The enemies are assumed. It doesn't say there will be enemies it just declares what will happen to them – it assumes there will be some. No matter what we do for the Lord, we'll have enemies. 2 Tim. 3:12; Ps. 37:12-15; Matt. 5:10-12; 10:22-25; John 15:19-21; John 16:2, 33; 17:14; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:3-4; Heb. 11:32-38; 1 Pet. 2:20-21; 3:14; 4:12-16; 5:9-10*

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Psa 37:12-15 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. (13) The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. (14) The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, *and* to slay such as be of upright conversation. (15) Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Mat 5:10-12 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11) Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. (12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Mat 10:22-25 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. (23) But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. (24) The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. (25) It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

Joh 15:19-21 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (20) Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. (21) But all these things will they do unto

you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Joh 16:2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Joh 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

1Th 3:3-4 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. (4) For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Heb 11:32-38 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets: (33) Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (35) Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: (36) And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of

bonds and imprisonment: (37) They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (38) (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

1Pe 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

1Pe 4:12-16 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (14) If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (16) Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

1Pe 5:9-10 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (10) But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.

B. They are seen as being of the Devil – "the synagogue of Satan"

1. The synagogue was the teaching place for the Jews, specifically. There were no other

people on earth that used the synagogue.

2. For it to be the synagogue of "Satan" would indicate that these were people that wanted everyone to believe they were of the Lord, but their fruits portrayed them otherwise, and if you're not for the Lord, you're against the Lord. Matt. 4:10; 6:24; Josh. 24:15; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Kings 18:21; Luke 16:13; Gal. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:10; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17

Mat 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, *Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Mat 6:24 *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

Jos 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

1Sa 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

1Ki 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the

people answered him not a word.

Luk 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Gal 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

2Ti 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

1Jn 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

3. This is also referring to Jews by birth that had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. They were Jews historically but not spiritually.

C. At times, we will have the privilege of seeing some of our enemies come to Christ – "I will make them to come and worship"

1. This indicates the saving grace of Christ, and, His drawing power – “I will make them” – John 6:44-45, 65; Matt. 11:25-27

Joh 6:44-45 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Mat 11:25-27 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (26) Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. (27) All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

2. An indication is given here of their true conversion – “before thy feet” – shows the humbleness of the convert being willing to do anything required of them. Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20

Mat 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Act 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

3. This conversion of some of the Jews was because they saw in the church the love of

Christ.

Conclusion to point III: During the church age period under review here, there were great revivals, but with those revivals came great opposition. The opposition came from within "Christianity" itself, not from the outside. The revivalists had great liberty to preach to the masses of people, but they were persecuted from within their own ranks.

The persecution from our enemies quite often comes from within. Remember, it was one of the inner 12 disciples that betrayed Jesus to the Romans to be crucified. If they did it to Him, how do we think we're any different?

IV. THE TRUE CHURCH WILL BE EXEMPT FROM THE WRATH OF GOD – vs. 10

There is much discussion today, and has been for a long time, over whether the church will be around for the 7-year period known as the Tribulation. I believe this verse indicates that we won't be. It gives to a church that will be in existence until the close of this age that they will be kept from the "hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." Barring some sort of natural or artificial phenomenon that would affect the whole earth the only thing this could be talking about is the Tribulation. Hence, it is logical that the rapture of the church, the true church, will take place before the Tribulation. That's why we are pre-tribulation rapturists.

A. Exempt because they've been faithful to the Word of God.

1. This is speaking of the true church, those that hold to the Word of God as final in authority. This can be said of any church, in any age that holds, or held, to the Word of God.
2. "Thou hast kept" – guarded against – here, figuratively speaking, guarded both individual self and the church against erring from the Word of God.
3. "The word of my patience"
 - a) This is speaking of the word of God. "The doctrine which has exposed you to so much trouble and persecution, and required so much patience and magnanimity to bear up under its attendant trials." (Adam Clarke)
 - b) Not the words which Christ has spoken concerning patience, but the word of Christ which requires patience to keep it; the gospel which teaches the need of a patient waiting for Christ. Rev. 1:9; 13:10; 14:12

[Rev 1:9](#) I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

[Rev 13:10](#) He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

[Rev 14:12](#) Here is the patience of the

saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

B. Exempt based upon the power of Christ and His promises – “I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation”

1. “I also will keep thee” – this is in like kind to the church keeping the Word of God. Just as they have been faithful in keeping His Word He will be faithful in keeping them.
2. “From” – out of
3. “The hour of temptation” – speaking both of the church in Philadelphia at the time, as well as the church age in view from the great Tribulation. Literally, “the hour of the temptation” pointing to the Tribulation period.

The reason it would appear this points to the Tribulation is that the next thing given in the book of Revelation is that of the Tribulation. It is, in order of the book, the next hour of temptation.

C. Exempt from a trial that the entire world will partake of – “which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”

1. This is another indication of the Tribulation – it’s going to affect the entire world, and every person on it.

2. It is spoken of as a time "to try", hence, called the trial, or tribulation.
3. "That dwell upon the earth" – this wording indicates that those written to in this letter wouldn't be around "upon the earth" to partake in the trial. This goes to the next phrase, the first phrase of verse 11, "Behold, I come quickly", referencing the Rapture of the church.

D. Why we are pre-tribulationists

1. The context of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (the text passage for the Rapture) indicates nothing that would place it after or during the tribulation. It is in reference to those alive doing what they should be doing.

1Th 4:13-18 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (17) Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another

with these words.

2. References to the entire tribulation say nothing about the church being called out in the middle or at the end. 1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; Prov. 16:4; Ezek. 38:10-17

1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

1Th 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Eze 38:10-17 Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, *that* at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: **(11)** And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, **(12)** To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are now* inhabited, and upon the people *that are* gathered out of the nations,

which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. (13) Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? (14) Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know *it*? (15) And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: (16) And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. (17) Thus saith the Lord GOD; *Art* thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days *many* years that I would bring thee against them?

3. The call to "Come up hither" is given before the Tribulation starts – Rev. 4:1. As ambassadors for Christ, we will be called home before the war starts.
4. Paul the Apostle and Preacher of Grace does not once mention the church in connection with the "Great Tribulation" period
5. The church has already been judged at Calvary

6. Every Bible type shows God's people being delivered before God brought judgment upon the people of the world – Noah, Lot, Israel (Passover)
7. The "Wedding Supper" takes place in heaven at the end of the Tribulation
8. His coming for His saints is said to be sudden, momentarily, and "in an Hour when ye think not"
9. The language and order of the Book of the Revelation with the "Divine Division" of the Book shows the church to be "caught out" before the Tribulation
 - a) Rev. 1:19 – which thou hast seen – past – ch. 1
 - b) Which are – present – ch. 2-3
 - c) Which shall be hereafter – future – ch. 4-22

Conclusion to point IV: Although we have looked at the future state of the church, there would have been a real hour of temptation that the church in Philadelphia faced. Most theologians believe it was the hour of temptation, or the persecution under Trajan, which was greater and more extensive than the preceding ones under Nero and Domitian.

The church age period of 1700-1900 AD was faithful to the Lord, and kept His word and because of that they will be raptured out before the great Tribulation begins.

No matter the trial we face, we know that the Lord

is there to either keep us from it or keep us through it.

V. THE TRUE CHURCH WILL BE FOUND BUSY WHEN THE LORD COMES BACK – VS. 11

The first word of this verse – “Behold” – is an imperative. It is telling the church to listen carefully. It is a one-word sentence that is the precursor to what’s to come. The Lord wanted the church at Philadelphia to realize the great truth that was to follow, namely, that He was coming back at any time and they needed to be found busy.

A. *Busy because time is short – “I come quickly”*

1. “I” – This is speaking of Christ. He is the one that is coming back.
2. “Come” – am coming – this is an assurance on the Lord’s part that He is very definitely coming back, and since God can’t lie, and Christ is God, then He can’t lie, then this must be an irrevocable promise - an absolute.
3. “Quickly” – suddenly, without warning – Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 12, 20; Zeph. 1:14; Rom. 13:11-14; Phil. 4:5; James 5:9

Rev 1:3 Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

Rev 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy

of this book.

Rev 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Rev 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, **Surely I come quickly.** Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Zep 1:14 The great day of the LORD *is* near, *it is* near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

Rom 13:11-14 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. (12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. (13) Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. (14) But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

Php 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

Jas 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

B. Busy doing what we're supposed to be doing – "hold that fast which thou hast"

1. "Hold . . . Fast" – to use strength to seize

or retain – Rev. 2:13, 25; 3:3

Rev 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Rev 2:25 But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.

Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

2. "That" – referring back to the previous verse, "the word of my patience"
3. "Which thou hast" – God didn't expect them to have more than they were given but He did expect them to keep what they had. God won't require us to do more than we're able but He does require us to be faithful with what He's given us. Matt. 24:46; 25:21, 23; Luke 12:42-43; 16:10-12; 1 Cor. 4:2

Mat 24:46 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Mat 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Mat 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee

ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Luk 12:42-43 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season? (43) Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Luk 16:10-12 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. (11) If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? (12) And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

1Co 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

C. *Busy so we can honor our Saviour with a crown to cast at His feet – “that no man take thy crown”*

1. “That no man take” – not another Christian taking our place but an enemy stealing what will be ours if we’re found faithful and busy when Jesus comes back.
2. “Thy crown” – not speaking of one we already have, but one that will be waiting for us when the Lord returns. Rev. 2:10; 4:4-11; 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:3-4

Rev 2:10 Fear none of those things which

thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Rev 4:4-11 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. (5) And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (6) And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind. (7) And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle. (8) And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. (9) And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, (10) The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, (11) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

1Co 9:25 And every man that striveth for

the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

2Ti 2:5 And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Jas 1:12 Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

1Pe 5:3-4 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. (4) And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

VI. THE FUTURE OF THE TRUE CHURCH – VS. 12-13

When speaking of the “true church” here, we are primarily concerned with its members. Although these verses came in a letter to the Philadelphian church, I think they represent saints from all ages that have made their eternity sure. It is given to this church because it represents what Christ intended the church to be from the beginning and it is a good indication of what a true church, as well as true church members, ought to be.

So then, what happens to the true church, and the true church members in the future?

A. They have a permanent place in heaven – “a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out”

Also in mind here along with permanency is perseverance – they were still standing when all around them had fallen. 1 Kings 7:21; Jer. 1:18; Gal. 2:9

1Ki 7:21 And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz.

Jer 1:18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

Gal 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

B. They have the name of their Father – “I will write upon him the name of my God” – Rev. 2:17; 14:1; 22:4

Rev 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man

knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

1. At the time of this writing, in the culture of the day, once a child grew to the point of being an adult (boy, age of 12) they were "adopted," that is they were placed in the family with the name of their father – they now belonged.
2. When we get to heaven we will be given the name of our Father, indicating we are where we belong. Rom. 8:14-15; Isa. 56:5; Jer. 3:19; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 4:5-7; Eph. 1:5-14

Rom 8:14-15 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Isa 56:5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

Jer 3:19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of

nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

1Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Gal 4:5-7 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Eph 1:5-14 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after

that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

C. They will possess the land of their Father – “and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God”

1. When a person inherited land from his father then it was given to them in the father’s name – “land of his father”.
2. When we get to heaven we will inherit land, New Jerusalem, and we will have His name on it as having come from Him. Rev. 21:2, 10-27; Psa. 48:8; 87:3; Gal. 4:26-27; Heb. 12:22

Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:10-27 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (11) Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; (12) And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: (13) On the east three gates; on the

north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. (14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (15) And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. (16) And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. (17) And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and forty and four cubits, according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. (18) And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass. (19) And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; (20) The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. (21) And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass. (22) And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (23) And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. (24) And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. (25) And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there

shall be no night there. (26) And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. (27) And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Psa 48:8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

Psa 87:3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Gal 4:26-27 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. (27) For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

D. They will have a new name with all that goes with it – “and I will write upon him my new name” – Rev. 22:4; Isa. 65:15; Eph. 3:15

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

Isa 65:15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:

Eph 3:15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

With this new name, because it's the name of our Father, we get what He has prepared for us, our inheritance. 1 Pet. 1:3-5

1Pe 1:3-5 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Conclusion: What we've learned from the letter to the church at Philadelphia ought to encourage us to be more faithful to Christ for it shows that faithfulness is rewarded. It also shows us that the church age under discussion is still here and is still faithful to some extent. What we do for Christ now is what counts later - that's a message of glaring voice in the church letter under discussion here.