

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Christ's Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Philadelphia (3.7-13)



Review From Last Week (Revelation 3.1-6)

1. “The words of him who has the seven spirits of God” – repentance rooted in grace (3.1)
2. “Wake up! Strengthen! Remember! Keep! Repent!”
3. “The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.” (3.5)

Acts 3.20-21a: Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Revelation 19.6-8: Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

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And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.”⁸ “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie – behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.”¹⁰ Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.”¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.”¹² The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

1. Philadelphia in the First Century

- a. Missionary centre for Hellenism (located on main road between Europe and Asia); “Little Athens” (many/various temples; pillars in honour of benefactors)
- b. Built near a volcano (fertile land, but frequent evacuations because of earthquakes)
- c. City rebuilt in AD 17; renamed “Neocaesarea” (later renamed “Philadelphia Flavia”)

2. Christ's Self-identification: “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.” (3.7)

- a. “Holy One, True One”

Revelation 6.10: They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (OT title for God)

- b. “The key of David” (Eliakim is a prophetic type of Christ)

Isaiah 22.19-25: [Isaiah 22.15-18 is God's address to Shebna, the chief steward]¹⁹ I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station.”²⁰ In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,²¹ and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.”²² 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.”²³ And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house.”²⁴ And they will hang on him the whole honor of his father's house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the

flagons. ²⁵ In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 49.3-9: And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” ⁴ But I said, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.” ⁵ And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him-- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- ⁶ he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” ⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: “Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” (Cf. Isaiah 49.6 and Luke 2.32; Acts 26.23)

3. **Commendation:** “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.” (3.8)

a. “Open door”

- i. 3.7 = entrance to sanctuary/kingdom (i.e., salvation)
- ii. 3.8 = opportunity for Gospel witness

Colossians 4.2-5: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison – ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each.

1 Corinthians 16.8-9: But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. (cf. 2 Cor 2.12)

b. “I know that you have but little power” – power in weakness

1 Corinthians 11.18, 23-27, 30: Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast ... ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one – I am talking like a madman – with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure ... ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

2 Corinthians 12.9: [Jesus] 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, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

c. Imprisonment and Gospel Opportunity

Philippians 1.12-14: I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Acts 28.30-31: He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

4. **Exhortation:** “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie – behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept [the word about my patient endurance], I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.” (3.9-11)

- a. *Note parallel with Smyrna:* “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2.9-10)
- b. “behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.” (3.9)
- i. Ironic fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy about Israel (open door to evangelism among the Jews)

Isaiah 45.14: Thus says the LORD: “The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: ‘Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.’”

Isaiah 60.14: The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. (Cf. Isaiah 49.23)

Isaiah 43:4 Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. (cf. Deuteronomy 7.8; Isaiah 41.8; 44.2; 60.10; 63.9)

- c. “Because you have kept [the word about my patient endurance] ...”

John 8.29 “And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”

- d. "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth." (3.10)
- i. Trial/testing and God's deliverance/preservation (cf. Rev 7.1ff; 11.1-2; 12.6, 14-17; also Dan 12.1, 10; Acts 20.22-24; Rom 8.35-39)

John 17.9-21: I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Acts 20.22-24: And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

John 16.33 "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

- e. "those who dwell on the earth" = unrepentant humanity (cf. Rev 6.10; 8.13; 11.10; 12.12; 13.8, 12, 14; 14.6; 17.2,8)
- f. Testing/trial: proves faith and confirms unbelief

Revelation 7.1-3, 13-17 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea,³ saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." ... Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?"¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

1 Peter 1.6-8: In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith-- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire -- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the

revelation of Jesus Christ.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Revelation 9.20-21: The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk,²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 16.9-11: They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

5. **Promise:** “The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”
(3.12)

- a. Temple, city, new Jerusalem = cosmic tabernacle (Revelation 21-22), which is already anticipated in the church – God’s present temple (*naos*) on earth (1 Cor 3.16-17; 6.19-20; 2 Cor 6.16; Eph 2.19-22; 1 Pet 2.4-10)

Ephesians 2.19-22: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Hebrews 13.12-13: So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Revelation 21.1-5a: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place [lit. “tabernacle”] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” (cf. Rev 21.1off: the new Jerusalem is a cube 12 000³ [cf. Rev 7.4-8]).