

# Letter to the Church in Philadelphia

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Text: Revelation 3:7-13

This is the sixth in a series of lessons on the seven churches of Asia addressed in Revelation 2-3. Through John, Jesus sent a letter to each church, which He also shared with the others and with us as well. The letters described challenges they were facing, what they were doing well, what they needed to correct, and more. In studying these seven letters, every church can find encouragement and/or warnings that apply to them. We will notice these are we go through our study.

## About the City of Philadelphia

- Philadelphia was called “the gateway to the East” – situated where many would pass through it to Phrygia
- It was intended to be a “missionary” city – for the Greeks to spread their culture and civilization
- Devastated by an earthquake in 17 AD – same as Sardis; Roman emperor Tiberias remitted taxes and contributed to its rebuilding effort; in appreciation, they changed the name of the city to Neocaesarea (The New Town of Caesar), but the new name did not last

## Letter to the Church

- Description of Jesus –holy and true (v. 7), separate from the world and is the source of truth; has the key of David (cf. Isaiah 22:22), access to the Father is only through Him (cf. John 14:6)
- Current circumstances – “open door” (v. 8), opportunity to do good despite “little power” or limitations; faced trouble from “the synagogue of Satan” (v. 9); greater persecution was coming, but they would be kept from it (v. 10)
- Commendations – kept the Lord’s word (v. 8), obedient to Him; had not denied His name, despite pressure from “the synagogue of Satan“
- Condemnations – none; only this church and Smyrna were like this
- Punishment for sin – none mentioned because no sin was mentioned
- Reward for faithfulness – keep their crown (v. 11; cf. Revelation 2:10); made a pillar in the temple of God (v. 12), place of honor, in support of God and His worship; new name (v. 12), sign of ownership, new identity

## Main Lesson

- Use your opportunities – just as the city was intended to spread Greek culture, the church was to spread the message of the kingdom; may have been few in number

(“little power“), yet they were able to contribute to the cause of Christ; no one could take that opportunity from them, yet it was up to them to take advantage of it

- This is the lesson for us today – we need to use the opportunities we have for good; opportunities to show a Christ-like example (Galatians 2:20); opportunities to teach others the truth (1 Peter 3:15); opportunities to do good to others (Galatians 6:10); we will be judged based upon how we have used our opportunities (cf. Matthew 25:14-30)

## **Conclusion**

- It is easy to focus on our limitations – we can always find others who can do more or be more effective; but we are not judged by what others do, we will be judged for what we do
- Each one of us has opportunities that are unique to us – let us strive to use them to the glory of God