

# God's Promises to His People that Overcome



-Part 6: The Church at Philadelphia  
(Based on the Seven Churches in Revelation)

## Statement of Purpose for these Essays

In these series of essays, we have been discussing the messages that Jesus gave to what are known as, “the seven churches of Revelation” as found in Revelation chapters 1, 2, and 3. In the previous essay to this one (Part 5), we discussed the message to the assembly at Sardis. I had mentioned that to me, that message was the saddest to hear from Jesus. It spoke of a slumbering, almost to the point of death, assembly. In contrast to the assembly in Sardis, in this essay we hear the message to the assembly in Philadelphia. This is the church that everyone knows. It is the “church we all want to be like.” So much so that the word “Philadelphia” is one of the most popular word used in names of churches throughout the world, today. Even though they may be a good example of what the Body of Christ, as well as the individual believer should be, they were still encouraged by Jesus to “overcome,” as we will discuss.

Revelation 3:19 and 20 states, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”* As we discuss the Philadelphia church we may think that this does not apply. However, do not be so sure. Jesus desires and will have a Bride that is “spotless and without blemish.” There is no changing that no matter how we want to spin it to make us feel better. He tells us to repent for He is “at the door” and He is “knocking” - He is speaking to our hearts - the heart of everyone who calls them self a believer. Will we hear His voice, personally, as well as corporately?

To all of the churches mentioned, Jesus states promises to those who “overcome.” As we review each church, we will break down Jesus’ messages to each of the churches into the following segments:

- A brief history or description of that particular church location
- The description of Jesus given to that particular church
- A description of what that church did well and was commended for
- A description of what that church did not do well and was chastised for
- The things that Jesus told each church to overcome
- The promise given to those who overcome

*“He who is able to hear, let him listen and heed to what the Spirit is Saying”*

## Seven Churches in Revelation

- Ephesus – Revelation 2:1-7
- Smyrna – Revelation 2:8- 11
- Pergamum – Revelation 2:12-17
- Thyatira – Revelation 2:18-29
- Sardis – Revelation 3:1-6
- **Philadelphia – Revelation 3:7-13**
- Laodicea – Revelation 3:14-22



## The Church at Philadelphia – Revelation 3:7-13

- **A Little about Philadelphia** – “Philadelphia” comes from the Greek word, “*philadelphos*,” which means - “*brotherly love*” or in a broader sense, “*loving one like a brother; loving one's fellow countrymen.*”

Philadelphia was city in Asia Minor, situated near the eastern base of Mount Tmolus. It was founded about 133 B.C. by King Attalus of Pergamum, whose nickname was “*Philadelphus*,” which means “lover of a brother.” Attalus was noted for the admiration and love he had for his brother, Eumenes, so he named this city in honor of him. There are some references that say it was Eumenes that named the city “Philadelphia” to honor the love that his brother Attalus had for him. Whichever it may be the fact is that it was founded and named Philadelphia.

The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A. D., along with Sardis and other cities in that locality. Most of the other cities recovered rather quickly from the disaster, but the after-shocks continued in Philadelphia for quite a number of years, with the result being that the people had to flee the city repeatedly. Tiberius Caesar helped Philadelphia to recover from the earthquake, and out of gratitude the city changed its name to “Neocaesarea” (New Caesar), and for awhile it bore that name. Flavius also helped the city and for a time it was called “Flavio.” Philadelphia was also referred to as, “little Athens,” a nickname, because of the many small shrines and temples within the city to so many of the pagan gods. We will see that Jesus uses Philadelphia’s history concerning its many names later on in 3:12 in expressing His promises to those that overcome.

- **Description of Jesus** - “...*These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*”

Jesus refers to Himself as He that is “holy” and “true.” He is declaring His divinity as only God is truly holy. When he uses the term “true” this is referring to the fact that He is not a phony or that He is not a fake or false messiah - He is the real Messiah, the real Anointed One, the true Christ. As mentioned previously, Philadelphia was known as “little Athens” because it had so many shrines and small temples to so many gods. By Jesus referring to Himself in such a way, He was declaring truly who He was and is - the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Jesus also identified himself as one *"...who holds the key of David. He opens the door and no person can shut it."* This metaphor tells us that Jesus has complete control over the "royal household," His Kingdom as well as His church. The source of the metaphor is Isaiah 22:20-22 - *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open..."*

Isaiah speaks of an individual, Shebna, who had charge of the palace of the Judean king. The Lord says he will replace him with his servant, Eliakim (name means - "God raises" or "God sets up") son of Hilkiah (name means "my portion is Yahweh") Then, says the Lord through Isaiah: *"I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open"* Thus, Eliakim will have power to control entry into the "royal kingdom." As the king's steward, he would decide who can or cannot have access to the king.

This account in Isaiah is prophetic of the Messiah. In Revelation, Jesus makes it totally clear that He is the One who has the "key of David" and opens the door. The picture that it presents is that Jesus is the only one who grants access to God. We have access to the presence of God only through the Blood of the lamb, the perfect sacrifice, the Messiah Himself - Jesus. In Jesus' hand, is the "key" opens the door into the presence of God, his Kingdom and eternal life. As it states in John 14:6 - *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

- **What that Church did well** - *"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 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."*

Contrary to the church in Sardis in which Jesus found nothing to commend them for, the assembly at Philadelphia is an assembly that Jesus commended, highly. What did He commend them for?

They had kept His Word and had not yielded to the temptations of following after other gods. They stood steadfast for what they believed even in the midst of a hostile heathen, pagan culture. They did not compromise, nor did they deny any thing concerning Jesus and Him being their Lord and Savior. Jesus again refers to *"them of the synagogue of satan."* The reader is referred back to our discussion of the church in Smyrna where we reviewed this phrase.

However, concerning the usage of the term *"synagogue of satan"* here in this section, Jesus may have been referring to the Jews in that city of Philadelphia that may have been persecuting the believers in Philadelphia using the scripture in Isaiah concerning the "key of David" to try to prove that they (the Jews) had the "key" of access to God and not the believers in Jesus. This would be a direct assault against Jesus, and who He is and what He had done, thereby holding the "key of David." That is why Jesus may have commended them for resisting the temptation of denying the truth about who He is. Jesus is encouraging the believers that soon the truth will be revealed for all to see to and those that persecuted them will ultimately have to basically, "eat their words" and all will know that Jesus truly loves His Body.

- **What that Church did not do well** - Jesus does not bring any words of correction to the Philadelphia assembly. Again we see this is totally contrary to the assembly in Sardis which had nothing to be commended for but rather was sharply chastised. This does not mean that believers in Philadelphia were perfect. It just meant that the attitude of their heart was correct.
- **What to Overcome** - *"...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... hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

Jesus, is exhorting the assembly at Philadelphia as well as the Body of Christ today that are being faithful and standing fast against the temptations; the trials; the persecutions; the temptation to compromise; the temptations to be led astray by false doctrines, teachings and teachers; the temptations to be led astray by false prophets and their prophesies that are all contrary to the true Word of God -He is encouraging those of us to **hold fast!!!** We are reminded of the trials that will come as Jesus expressed in Matthew 24 and 25 - **hold fast!!!**

He is telling us that these things will come but He will answer our prayer and deliver us from the evil that we will encounter. It does not mean we will not go through these trials but it means that He will make a way of escape for us and deliver us.

- Matthew 6:13 - *"... And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:"*

- 1Corinthians 10:13 - *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

- **The Promise of Overcoming** - *"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."*

Jesus gives the assembly of Philadelphia, which can be applied to the Body of steadfast believers today, a four part promise.

Promise #1) *"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God..."* The scriptures tell us in 2Peter 2:8 that we are "lively stones" that make up the Temple of the living God. Here, does not just say that they will be only stones but also those that endure and stay steadfast without compromise will be "pillars" in the Temple. The Apostles are called the foundation stones. Here Jesus calls those believers, "pillars." Pillars are the strength of any structure. In Philadelphia, they experienced many earthquakes and experienced destruction of buildings. Jesus is saying to those that stand fast in these hours of great trial and persecution that they will be the strength within the Temple of God.

Jesus says, *"...and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."* Names reveal the character of the named person.

Promise #2) Jesus promises the He will, *"...write upon him(us) the name of my God."* This is a fulfillment of the promise at the conclusion of the Aaronic blessing found in Numbers 6: 27 - *"And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."*

Promise #3) Jesus then states, *"I will write [on him] the name of the city of my God."* The last two chapters of Revelation give a vivid description of this wonderful city, the *"New Jerusalem,"* coming down from heaven *"as a bride adorned for her husband"* -- a beautiful bride meeting her husband. The promise given by Jesus to those who hold on, who stand fast in the midst of a decaying world is that they will know and experience the love and intimacy of our *"bridegroom,"* Jesus, for his beautiful bride - the Body of Christ, the Church.

Promise #4) Lastly, Jesus says, *"I will also write on him my new name."* What does Jesus mean by saying He will have a *"New Name?"* Since a name symbolizes one's character this may be a reference to the fact that when Jesus' work of redemption is completed, He will have a new name. He was called Jesus, Yeshua meaning *"God saves"* to point to the fact that redemption will come through Him. When His work of redemption and salvation is complete, will He be known differently? In Revelation 19:12, we are told that when Jesus appears he will have *"a name written, that no man knew."* In the next verse it says that His name is called the *"Word of God."* To be honest I am not quite sure what this aspect of the promise concerning Jesus' *"new name"* that will be written on us, the believers, really is. In Revelation 2:17, in Jesus' promise to those who overcome in the church at Pergamum, we discussed previously, that we will have a *"new name etched into a white stone."* Could the two be associated with each other? I am not quite sure. The bottom line is this - no matter what *"that name"* might be, those that overcome will have that *"new name"* written upon their hearts, as well.

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In this end time hour, those within the Body who are doing the right thing and are not yielding to the temptations and compromise of society's culture are given wonderful promises by Jesus. Unfortunately, we may need to overcome at times even the inordinate things that enter into the *"church culture."* Jesus encourages us to ***"hold fast"*** – it will be worth it all. In Galatians 6:9, Paul encourages us, *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not,"* and again in 2Thessalonians 3:13, *"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."* Finally I want to leave you with the following scripture from Isaiah 40:31, *"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."* - **Hold Fast!!!**

*"He who is able to hear, let him listen and heed to what the Spirit is saying,"*  
- Both, corporately as a Body of Christ and individually as the Bride of Christ.