

Introduction

The seven churches represent at least four different things:

- Seven literal churches which existed at the time Revelation was given;
- Seven types of churches which can exist at any time in history;
- Seven types of churches which will exist in the Last Days;
- Seven types of individual believers.

Additionally, this writer believes as many do that each church represents a 5th aspect of a sequential, overlapping period of history when the corresponding church characterizes its overall condition for that time.

This is provided in much more detail in Jacob Prasch's book, "The Dilemma of Laodicea", which says of the age of Philadelphia that it characterizes what we call the "Great Awakening" of the late 17th through mid-20th centuries, building on the many changes brought about by the Reformation. Philadelphia corresponds to the most prolific period of spiritual success since the time of the founding Apostles. All of these churches existed and were present, but the main environment was dominated by what is written about Philadelphia.

Read verse 7

⁷"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

Q: What appears to be the main issue at Philadelphia?

A: Like Smyrna, there is nothing negative raised about this church.

Q: How does the meaning of "Philadelphia" correspond to the spiritual condition of this church?

A: "Philadelphia" means "brotherly love".

Q: What characteristics of Christ are emphasized for Philadelphia?

- "He who is holy and true..."
- "He...who has the key of David..."
- "He...who opens and no one will shut..."
- "He...who shuts and no one opens..."

Q: What is the "key of David"?

A: There is a significant parallel to what is mentioned in Isaiah concerning Eliakim:

²²"Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,
When he opens no one will shut,
When he shuts no one will open.

²³I will drive him like a peg in a firm place,
And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house
Isaiah 22:22-23

Whereas the historical Eliakim was given the authority over entrance or rejection to Hezekiah's court, Christ as the Son of David has the key to the kingdom of God, the authority over entrance or rejection to the

King of Heaven's court. At the very least this speaks to a powerful and fruitful working of the Gospel through this particular church.

Application: Great spiritual **opportunities** are entrusted to Christ according to His **will** and **timing**.

Read verses 8-9

⁸I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.

Q: What is the "good news"?

A: "I know your deeds".

Point: This phrase appears 5 times in the letters to the churches:

1. Ephesus (Rev. 2:2)
2. Thyatira (Rev. 2::19)
3. Sardis (Rev. 3:1)
4. Philadelphia (Rev. 3:8)
5. Laodicea (Rev. 3:15)

This is good news when it affirms faithfulness, as with Philadelphia, or bad news when it affirms unfaithfulness as in Laodicea.

Q: What is the first thing Christ is going to provide this church?

A: An "open door which no one can shut".

Q: What are the reasons given for this privilege?

- "...you have a little power..."
- "...you...have kept My word..."
- "...you...have not denied My name".

Application: These are qualities which have allowed them to accomplish their good deeds.

Q: What is the second thing Christ is going to provide this church?

A: The Judaizers, who also plagued the other good church in Smyrna (Rev. 2:9), will be humbled before Philadelphia.

Q: What is the purpose of humbling these Jews who "are not Jews"?

A: To "make them know that I have loved you".

Point: It is not just a demonstration of God's power but of His love.

Application: These two provisions are an **opportunity** to display and preach the Gospel to both the **friendly** and **unfriendly**. Faithfulness on a smaller **scale** has led to a divine **opportunity** for a much greater calling.

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¹⁰Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Read verses 10-11

Q: What is the reciprocity expressed in v.10?

A: Because “**you have kept** the word of My perseverance, **I also will keep you** from the hour of testing”.

Q: Why is the Word connected to “perseverance”?

A: Philadelphia did not merely read or even study Scripture, but put it into practice and thus lived it. It wasn’t just informational but practical.

Application: *Those whose choices, decisions, and behavior strictly conform to God’s Word will find that they will successfully endure and overcome this world by the Word.*

Q: What and when is the “hour of testing”?

A: There are two very important details which need to be properly understood in order to interpret this correctly:

1. It will “*come upon the whole world*”. It is not confined to a single location or limited to a few select nations or groups.
2. The purpose is “*to test those who dwell on earth*”.

This is speaking of one of the most featured aspects in God’s Word when it comes the End Times: “*the day of the Lord*”.

Point: *“The day of the Lord” is that time when all that remains is the pouring out of God’s wrath, from which believers are exempt.*

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
Romans 1:18

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
Romans 5:9

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
1 Thessalonians 5:9

Q: But isn’t that “hour of testing” the whole final week of years?

A: The specification that it is only for “*those who dwell on the earth*” consigns it to that phase closing out those 7 years known as “*the day of the Lord*”.

Point: *“Those who dwell on earth” is a common designation found within God’s prophetic Word which refers to those who have not accepted Christ as Savior— that is, those associated with rejecting the Messiah. (Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:2, 8)*

Q: What is the warning given to Philadelphia?

A: “*I am coming quickly*”.

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¹²He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and My new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Q: So how are they to prepare for His return?

A: "...hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Application: Just as persecution must be **endured**, likewise faithfulness must continue **uninterrupted** to the very end. This is the only way to **escape** "the hour of testing" and secure the crown of our **salvation**.

Read verses 12-13

Q: What is the first promise to all believers provided by Christ to all overcomers?

A: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it any more".

Q: But how does this fit with what we are told about the final temple in the New Jerusalem?

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Revelation 21:22

It speaks of our permanent residence with God without a formal structure..

Q: What are the three names which will be written on us?

- "...the name of My God..."
- "...the name of the city of My God..."
- "...My new name".

Point: All the markings of God's people recorded in Scripture foreshadow this final marking in eternity.

Application: Those qualified as the **temple** of Christ here on earth (1 Co. 3:16) become the final **temple** of God in eternity.

Overall Application

Throughout the Church's history, very big things have come from a very small group or even a single individual. They were provided a door opened by Christ which no one could shut. Such opportunities are provided to the faithful whose priority is to put God's Word into practice to the very end not just personally, but in all their endeavors.

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