

# Revelation 3:7-13

- Keep the word of Christ - Philadelphia -

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## Foreword

- ❖ The prophetic message of Christ, which has been sent to the church of Philadelphia, has much to say to the church of the 21st-century.
  - The church has little strength. This probably refers to the number of its members and their social status. There are many small churches in this world. Especially in those countries where Christians are a minority. Their strength doesn't lie in the numbers, but in keeping the word of Christ.
  - These churches will find a door opened. Within the context of Revelation, this might refer to Revelation 4:1, but also to their efforts to evangelize.
  - The church receives marvellous promises. The faithful Christians will inherit the new heaven and new earth and serve God forever.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Revelation. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand alone."

## Context

- ❖ The prophetic message of Jesus Christ to the church of Philadelphia is part of the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is like a large painting. You need to look at the whole in order to understand the details.
- ❖ A brief outline of the Book of Revelation:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This outline for sermons is very brief and does not discuss all the (many) different theories about the structures and outlines of the Book of Revelation. Beale (1999) provides a detailed outline. For discussion see Garrow (1997).

<b>Introduction (Rev. 1:1-3)</b>	
	The origin and command to write this Revelation down.
<b>The Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:4-22:21)</b>	
Rev. 1:4-8	The opening liturgical setting.
Rev. 1:9-3:22	PART 1
Rev. 4:1-22:11	PART 2
Rev. 22:12-21	The closing liturgical setting.

- PART 1: The risen and exalted Christ and his seven messages to the seven churches in the Roman Province Asia.
- PART 2: The heavenly courtroom and the judgment of God, ending with the descent of the new heaven and earth.

<b>Part 1 (Rev. 1:9-3:22)</b>	
Rev. 1:9-20	The risen and exalted Christ reveals himself to John and to the churches.
Rev. 2:1-3:22	The seven messages to the seven churches of Asia. Jesus Christ knows the deeds of each church and of each individual. He calls them to repent where necessary to prepare them for the things to come, which they need to overcome.

- ❖ There is much discussion about the date of writing of the Revelation.
  - Some commentators propose a date near the reign of Emperor Nero (AD 68).
  - Others propose a date during the reign of emperor Domitian (AD 81-96).
    - In the case of the message to the church of Philadelphia, the outcome of this discussion is of lesser importance. They did not suffer persecution at the moment of writing. Christ will protect them during “the great tribulation” (Rev. 7:14).
- ❖ The socio-economical and historical-geographical context of 1st-century Philadelphia is not that important.

## Form and structure

- ❖ Each message to one of the seven churches has the same structure:

		reference
Commission to write	Rev 3:7	
Presentation of the exalted Christ	Rev 3:7	Rev 1:18
Praises and commendations	Rev 3:8-10	
Call to repentance <sup>2</sup>		
Promise <sup>3</sup>	Rev 3:11, 12	Rev 21:1-22:20
Call to listen	Rev 3:13	

## Theological notes

### General remarks

- ❖ The Book of Revelation is trinitarian (God – Holy Spirit – Jesus Christ; Rev. 1:4-5) in character.
  - God is the first and the last (Rev. 1:8) – Jesus Christ is the first and the last (Rev. 1:17).
  - Jesus Christ speaks to the churches (Rev. 2:1-6) and the churches are summoned to listen to what the Spirit (Rev. 2:7) says.
- ❖ The Book of Revelation is foremost a liturgical book with prayers, doxologies, confessions, prophecies and visions. It shows the heavenly liturgy in images and this liturgy affects the history of this world when the plagues of God strike this earth. Rev. 4:11 explains why: **“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”**
  - The first priority in the life of every human being is to glorify God.
  - This liturgical book reminds us of the liturgy in the tabernacle (especially) and the temple of the Old Testament. This explains the many references to the altars and the priestly appearances of Christ and some of his angels.
- ❖ The Book of Revelation is also a prophetic book about the past, the present and the future. It sheds light on the past, the present situation of the seven churches in Asia Minor, and the future, culminating in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth.
  - From chapter 4 onwards the judgment of God is the dominating theme. He will do justice (Rev. 4-5; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 21:1-15 and other passages).

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<sup>2</sup> There is no “call to repentance.”

<sup>3</sup> From this message onwards the “promise” precedes the “call to listen.”

## Technical and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Reading and understanding the Book of Revelation requires:
  - Profound knowledge of the Old Testament.
    - The books of Exodus and Numbers, Ezekiel and Daniel are of particular importance in this regard. These books bear relation to oppression and deliverance of the people of God (Egypt and Babylon).
  - Knowledge of the Greek-Roman world of the first century.
  - Knowledge of figures of speech, because of all the metaphors and other figures of speech.
  - Knowledge of the structure of Revelation (see above).
  - (Elementary) knowledge of Hermeneutics.
- ❖ John received this Revelation from Jesus Christ and at the same time, this Revelation reveals the risen and exalted Christ, who holds the keys of (life and) death and Hades (Rev. 1:17). John understood the words he heard and the visions he saw, though sometimes they needed to be explained to him (Rev. 1:19-20).
- ❖ John wrote down what he heard and saw in this book and sent it to the seven churches in Asia Minor, an important province of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In these seven messages to the churches of Asia, Jesus Christ addresses major aspects of church life. He praises and rebukes them and gives them promises of the life to come. Christians, members of these churches, understood these messages. Twice, people are mentioned by name and they were warned against a movement called the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6; 2:15), active among the churches. These Christians were far more familiar with the figures of speech used in the Revelation than we are nowadays.
  - Figures of speech are not always easily understood by 21st-century readers. Sometimes they are explained, more often not. Figures of speech allow for more than one explanation and application. That explains the multitude of commentaries and theories.
  - In the process of explaining and applying the prophecies of this book, the interpreter should ask himself two questions:
    - To which exegetical tradition do I belong? There is a plethora of traditions, especially in the Anglo-American World. To mention only three:
      - Amillennialism;
      - Postmillennialism;
      - Premillennialism.

- Secondly, the interpreter should be aware of his own situation and of the local Christian community. What is my own political-religious situation and how does this situation affect my reading and understanding of the Book of Revelation?

❖ **PHILADELPHIA** was located near the upper end of the very fertile plateau in the Cogamus River in the midst of a very prosperous agricultural region, though it was (and is) notoriously subject to frequent earthquakes. A severe one in AD 17 destroyed the city, and this was followed by a series of intermittent shocks which led the people to continue living outside the city for some years because of the structural instability of many of the city buildings and walls. This disaster made an indelible impact on the contemporary world as the greatest in human history (Pliny *HN* 2.86.200).



Philadelphia was among the cities whose tribute (taxes) was remitted for five years to allow the people to have the resources to rebuild.<sup>4</sup>

- Barclay comments: “When this earthquake devastated it, Tiberius was as generous to Philadelphia as he had been to Sardis. In gratitude, it changed its name to Neocaesarea—the New City of Caesar. In the time of Vespasian, Philadelphia was to change its name, again out of gratitude, to Flavia, for Flavius was the emperor’s family name. It is true that neither of these new names lasted and ‘Philadelphia’ was restored. But the people of Philadelphia knew what it was to receive ‘a new name.’”<sup>5</sup> (See Rev 3:12).
- ❖ Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch on the Orontes, visited the city on his way to his martyrdom in Rome (AD 107) and also sent a letter from Troas to the church at Philadelphia. Some of the members of the church of this city were martyred ca AD 155 along with Polycarp.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ The name of the city means “**The love of the brethren.**”

#### Verse 7

- ❖ Holy = “**ἅγιος**”: 1, 2. The one who is **dedicated or consecrated to the service of God.**<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Gasque, W. W. (1992, p.304-305). Philadelphia (Place). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.)

<sup>5</sup> Barclay, W. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 138).

<sup>6</sup> Gasque, W. W. (1992, p.304-305). Philadelphia (Place). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.)

<sup>7</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p.10).

- ❖ True = “**ἀληθινός**”: 1. **pertaining to being in accord with what is true, true, trustworthy** of Christ, the judge of the world.<sup>8</sup>

#### Verse 8-10

- ❖ Placed = “**δίδωμι**”: 13. **to grant by formal action, grant, allow**.<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ Keep = “**τηρέω**”:
  - 3. **to persist in obedience, keep, observe, fulfill, pay attention to**<sup>10</sup> (verse 8, 10).
  - 2. **to cause a state, condition, or activity to continue, keep, hold, reserve, preserve**<sup>11</sup> (verse 10.b), b. unharmed or undisturbed, d. of being protective.

## Exposition

#### Verse 7

- ❖ “**To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write**”: The identity of the angel is unknown. It might be a heavenly being, but also a human messenger:
  - “**a human messenger serving as an envoy, an envoy, one who is sent**.”<sup>12</sup>
    - By humans or by God; prophets.
  - “**a transcendent power who carries out various missions or tasks, messenger, angel**.”<sup>13</sup>
    - By God.

The most obvious explanation is a messenger sent by John to the church of Laodicea, carrying not only this message but also a “copy” of the Book of Revelation in order to read it aloud in front of the congregation. So that the members of this church can “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 3:22).
- ❖ “**These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.**”
  - “**These are the words.**”
    - This is the solemn introduction of a prophetic message, comparable to introductions of the words of the prophets of the Old Testament.
  - “**of him who is holy and true,**” (of God: Rev 4:8, 6:10).
    - Christ is fully dedicated to God, his plan, and his service.

<sup>8</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 43).

<sup>9</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 243).

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 1002).

<sup>11</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 1002).

<sup>12</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 8).

<sup>13</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 8).

- And as judge, he will be true and trustworthy.
- It is a Messianic title (Mk 1:24).
  - “We believe and know that **you are the Holy One of God**” (Jn 6:69).
- “In the Bible ‘holiness’ is the very essence of God, the quality that makes God what he is, different and set apart from human beings. It carries a sense of separateness from sin, of exclusiveness, of uniqueness. And this divine quality applies to objects or people who are set apart, dedicated to the service and worship of God. The people of God are called ‘the holy ones’ or ‘the saints’ (5:8; see also ‘the holy city’ in 11:2; 21:2, and ‘the holy angels’ in 14:10).<sup>14</sup>”
- “The Greek for *the true one* occurs also in 3:14 (‘true witness’), 19:11 (‘called ... True’), and elsewhere. In this context it seems to mean ‘the true Messiah’. But *true* here may have the meaning of ‘faithful’ (see Ps 31:5; Isa 65:16, where ‘God of truth’ means ‘a faithful God’), and so here it may mean ‘the faithful (or, trustworthy) one’ in his service to God.”<sup>15</sup>
- True stands in opposition to “liars” and “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 3:9).
- **“who holds the key of David...”**
  - Isaiah 22:20-22 “In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiyah. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. **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.**”
    - “It is probable that *of David* means ‘of David’s kingdom,’ that is, of the Messianic kingdom.”<sup>16</sup>
    - Revelation 3:7 doesn’t quote Isaiah 22:20-22. These words are applied to Christ within the context of Revelation. He is the son of David.
  - Christ has received full and the ultimate authority over opening and closing the doors with regard to the preaching of the Gospel, and the door of heaven (Rev 4:1). See the notes on verse 8-10. He has also received the keys of death and Hades (Rev 1:18).

#### Verse 8-10

##### ❖ **“I know your deeds.”**

- Christ knows all the deeds of the church and of its members. This should not surprise us because the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16) and the Holy Spirit knows what is in the minds of men. He dispenses his gifts (1 Cor 12: 7, 11). He is the Paraclete (Jn 14:15-17). And finally, all our deeds have been written in the books (Rev 20:11-15).

##### ❖ **“See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.”**

- **“See”** is a call to attention.
- **“placed”** can also be translated as **“granted.”** In that case, it is a ‘reward’ for the perseverance of the Philadelphians.

<sup>14</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 71).

<sup>15</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 72).

<sup>16</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 72).

- Christ himself has placed an open door. The Philadelphians are encouraged by these words.
  - What is the function of the open door? The opportunity to preach the Gospel: “On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and **how he had opened the door of faith** to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27).
  - “But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because **a great door for effective work has opened to me**, and there are many who oppose me” (1 Cor 16:9; also 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:13).
- It is possible to see this as a reference to Revelation 4:1, “before me was a door standing open in heaven.”
- ❖ **“I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”**
  - **“Little strength”** probably refers to the size of the congregation and the social status of the Christians. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; **not many were influential; not many were of noble birth**” (1 Cor 1:26).
  - “But he 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For **when I am weak, then I am strong**” (2 Cor 12:9, 10; see also Phil 4:13), by the power of God.
- ❖ **“yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”** (See also Rev 2:13.)
  - This might imply that some persecution had occurred.
  - “This means ‘you have not disowned me,’ ‘you have not renounced your faith in me,’ ‘you have not said that you do not believe in me,’ or ‘you have not said, “I don’t believe in Jesus (Christ),”’ that is, ‘you have not apostatized.’ For the same verb ‘deny’ see Mt 10:33; Lk 12:9; 2 Pet 2:1; Jude 1:4.”<sup>17</sup>
  - Revelation 14:12, “this calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints **who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful** to Jesus.”
  - **“Not denied my name:”** Christ is Lord. **He is “the ruler of the kings of the earth”** (Rev 1:5).

Pliny wrote to Emperor Trajan the following account of a Christian worship service (AD 110):

*They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal.*

(n.d.). Retrieved December 08, 2017, from [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/pliny\\_letter\\_to\\_trajan\\_about\\_christians.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/pliny_letter_to_trajan_about_christians.htm)

<sup>17</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 73).



❖ **“those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars”**

- The conflict between Jesus and the **“Jews”** is very prominent in the Gospel of John. In this gospel, the designation **“Jews”** is (primarily) used for the opponents of Jesus (Jn 10:33; 11:8; Rom 2:29).
- **“Those who.”** In front of the government and the general public, they claim to be the true descendants of God’s chosen people and having the right of certain privileges granted to them by the Roman Emperor. In the first century, many Christians came from Jewish origin.<sup>18</sup>
- **“A synagogue of Satan.”** This doesn’t mean that they worship Satan. This designation might indicate that the Jews made use of lies and slander to discredit the Christians.
  - **“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies”** (Jn 8:44).
  - Of particular interest are the different designations **“church”** (Rev 3:7) and **“synagogue”** (Rev 3:9). This indicates that the Christian church is clearly distinguished from the old Jewish synagogue.
  - **“The language of slander could well allude to delation to the civic authorities, and the references to Satan (‘the accuser’) and the devil (a word meaning ‘calumniator’, ‘seducer’ or ‘accuser’), as well as the warning of imprisonment in verse 10, also point to legal proceedings against Christians,”**<sup>19</sup> instigated by some members of the synagogue. Satan is also the power behind the powers of this world (Rev 13:1, 2).
  - An example of this slander is found in Acts 18:12, 13:  
**“While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. ‘This man,’ they charged, ‘is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.’”**

❖ **“—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.”**

- **“I will make them come.”** Christ is acting, not only in the lives of Christians but also in the lives of these adversaries of the Church.
- **“And fall down.”** **“This gesture can be an indication of their desire to join the Christians”**<sup>20</sup> and a sign of sincere repentance. Compare 1 Corinthians 14:25 (14:22-25):
  - **“ So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’”**
- **“And acknowledge.”** They were mistaken. The Lord had not abandoned his church but instead has loved them.
  - **“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”** (Jn 15:12,13; Jn 10:11, 15; Rom 5:6-8; Eph 5:2; 1 Jn 4:7-11). The love of Christ is known through the impact of the crucifixion upon the lives of ordinary men and women and their mutual love.s

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<sup>18</sup> See, Resseguie, J. L. (2009, p. 89).

<sup>19</sup> Boxall, I. (2006, p. 54).

<sup>20</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 74).

- ❖ **“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you”**
  - The Philadelphians already shared in the suffering of John and others, such as Antipas (Rev 1:9; 2:13).
  - “The promise here is not that they alone, of all the world’s population, will be exempt from these sufferings; rather the promise is that God will keep them firm during this period of hardship and calamity (see the similar thought in Jn 17:15). So it may be better to translate ‘I will keep you safe (protect you) in the time of distress that is coming on the world.’”<sup>21</sup> This is not a reference to the so-called rapture.<sup>22</sup> A very important argument is the use of the word **“overcoming,”** which refers not to a kind of rapture, but to be victorious till the end.
- ❖ **“the hour of trial.”** Endurance and the hour of trial are important themes in the Revelation:
  - This hour of trial is depicted in Revelation 12, 13.
  - “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints” (Rev 13:10; 14:12).
- ❖ **“to test those who live on the earth.”** This is probably not a reference to Christians, but to those who follow the beast. (See Rev 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8.)
  - A major question is if this hour of trial is imminent in the future or has happened already at the end of the first century and at the beginning of the second century AD. The church of Philadelphia doesn’t exist anymore. In that case, the promise “I will also keep you” is at risk to appear as a void promise. But a prophetic word can be iterative, which means that Christ kept this church safe during the hour of trial which tested those who lived on the earth AD 90 – 120 and that Christ will keep any church safe when there is another hour of trial.
  - Wiersbe states: “the ultimate reference is to the Tribulation that will encompass the earth before Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom. In many Bible scholars’ understanding, Revelation 3:10 is a promise that the church will not go through the Tribulation.”<sup>23</sup> Jesus Christ gave this promise to the local church of Philadelphia in the first and second century A.D., but Wiersbe applies these words to the universal church in the (nearby) future. This exegesis has not sufficient ground.

#### Verse 11-13

- ❖ **“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”**
  - The twenty-four elders (Rev 4:4) had crowns of gold on their heads. Revelation 2:10 mentions the crown of life.
  - This is the final coming of Christ (Rev 22:7, 12, 20).
  - “They are to maintain firmly their Christian faith and commitment, not to waver in their faithfulness to Christ. So this clause may also be phrased as ‘You must continue to believe strongly in me’ or ‘You must remain loyal to me.’”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 75).

<sup>22</sup> Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 290).

<sup>23</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, p. 579).

<sup>24</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 62).

- “The crown that Christ gives to his followers as the prize for their faithfulness must be kept safe from all who would, by some means, take it from them. What is meant is that they are to remain faithful so as not to lose their ultimate reward: life with Christ in the Messianic kingdom. Other ways of expressing this clause are ‘so that no person may take away (steal) your victory prize by force’ or ‘so that no one may be able to use force and steal your prize that shows that you have conquered.’”<sup>25</sup>
- Compare this with parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30).
- ❖ **“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.”**
  - **“Overcomes”** “Overcomes” is also used of Christ (Rev 5:5), and of the victorious believers, “and I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name” (Rev 15:2).
    - “Overcoming refers to the victory of one’s whole life of faith,”<sup>26</sup> and not to the victory at the end.
    - “‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Mt 7:21-23).
    - “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 Jn 5:5).
  - The promise to the Philadelphians is by far the most elaborated one and refers to the whole of chapter 21 and 22 of the Revelation.
- ❖ **“Pillar in the temple of my God.”**
  - The temple is an important image in the Revelation (; the temple in heaven: Rev 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:6-8; 16: 1, 17; the new Jerusalem: Rev 7:15; 21:22).
  - The apostles have been called pillars (Gal 2:9). The local congregation is designated as: “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:16).
  - Temple imagery is found at other places in the New Testament.
    - The people of God are called: “a kingdom and priests” (Rev 1:6; 1 Pet 2:9, Ex 19:5, 6).
    - The church of God is called a “temple” (1 Cor 3:16, 17; Eph 2:21).
    - Those who will overcome: “are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent (tabernacle) over them” (Rev 7:15; see also Rev 21:22).
  - **“My God.”** Christ is serving God, his Father, continuously.
  - **“I will make.”** Christ will build a (spiritual) temple. Compare 1 Peter 2:5.
- ❖ **“Never again will he leave it.”**
  - He will serve God as a priest forever and ever as an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem.
- ❖ **“I will write on him.”** There are three names. The name functions as “being a representative of”, “belong to”:

<sup>25</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 76).

<sup>26</sup> Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 271).

- (1) **“The name of my God.”** The name is not mentioned, probably due to the Jewish custom not to pronounce the name and to circumscribe the name of God (Rev 1:4).
- (2) **“And the name of the city of my God.”** (See also Phil 3:20).
  - **“the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God.”**
    - Is coming down is not a promise for the future, but a reality in the present (see, Rev 21:10; also Heb 12:22).
  - The old Jerusalem was also the city of God, where he had established his name (Ps 48:8; Ps 87:5; Isa 2:2).
- (3) **“and I will also write on him my new name.”**
  - He will represent God, the new Jerusalem, which is the new sanctuary, and Christ. The High priest represented the twelve tribes of Israel serving God in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex 28:21). The names of the twelve tribes were written on the breastplate of the High Priest
  - Compare Isaiah 62:2: **“The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name** that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.”
- ❖ **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**
  - Christ calls for obedience to the teaching of the Spirit.
    - **“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,** because the time is near” (Rev 1:3).
  - There is an identity between the risen and glorified Christ and the Spirit:
    - **“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”** (Jn 14:26).
  - Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43. This is also an indication that not all members of this church will respond positively.

## Application

### Verse 7

- ❖ To know Christ as the holy one and true. He will judge. He will protect. He will keep all his promises.
  - He has the ultimate power and authority given by God to open and to close the Kingdom of Heaven.

### Verse 8-10

- ❖ He knows the deeds. In this letter, Christ doesn't mention sins. The sermon must be balanced.
  - Comfort and encourage the small congregation, especially when there are people living in poverty or when the congregation faces persecution or opposition.
  - The strength of a congregation isn't determined by numbers nor by financial means, but primarily and foremost in KEEPING the word of Christ and to proclaim (not to deny) the NAME.
    - Keeping the word means:

- Acknowledge Christ as the sovereign Lord, who has been appointed by God to save and judge.
  - Acknowledge and accept the love of Christ, the love of the crucified one. This becomes visible in the mutual love of the members of the congregation.
  - Keeping the word of Christ means, that each member is governed by the Spirit of Christ. Christians and the congregation of Christ show the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23).
- ❖ Christ will change the hearts of opponents. Pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5:44).
  - ❖ Christ will protect, during periods of testing, locally and globally!

### Verse 11-13

- ❖ **“I am coming soon.”** How can we interpret and understand this promise? Remember that this is true for every generation. In a sense, this is also true for those who already died. Were they prepared to meet their Lord and Saviour? And Christ taught (and warned) that he will come like a thief in the night (1 Tess 5:2). A Christian should be vigilant and expecting. It is a strong incentive for Christians: Philippians 4:4-7.
- ❖ Remember that there is a crown (of victory) awaiting the victorious.
- ❖ The promises! The victorious will serve God forever and belong to God, to Christ and are citizens (priests and kings, Revelation 1:5, 6) of the New Jerusalem.
  - The New Jerusalem is already coming down.
- ❖ Christ will personally write a new name. He knows all our names and new names. What a comforting and encouraging message.
- ❖ This message was not only meant for the church in Philadelphia but for all the churches.
  - The Spirit says! Listen to his word.

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