



## REVELATION. 3:7-13 – THE OPEN-DOOR CHURCH



- Philadelphia guarded and commanded an important pass through the mountains between the Hermus and Meander valleys.
  - Philadelphia benefited from its location at the junction of several important trade routes (as well as from being a stop on the Imperial Post Road), earning it the title **“door to the East”**.<sup>1</sup>
- Philadelphia was subject to frequent and severe earthquakes. No city of Asia Minor suffered more, or so much, from violent and oft-recurring earthquakes, and the historian Strabo, who lived between 64 BC and AD 21, said that Philadelphia was “full of earthquakes.” He may have been there at the time of the great earthquake that destroyed the city in AD 17. That was only one of a series of quakes that kept the citizens in a state of fearful expectancy.

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 114–15

- **Strabo** wrote: *“Philadelphia has no trustworthy walls, but daily in one direction or another they keep tottering and falling apart. The inhabitants, however, pursue their original purpose, ever keeping in mind the writhing pangs of the ground, and building with a view to counteracting them.”*
- **Strabo** was astonished that a city should ever have been founded in such a locality, and he questioned the sanity of the people for re-entering the ruined city and planning to rebuild to withstand the future shocks which were monetarily expected. He felt that when people are driven from a city by earthquakes they ought to be wise enough never to return. He declared that the walls of the houses were incessantly opening, and sometimes one, and sometimes another part of the city was experiencing some damage. **The citizens therefore lived in constant dread of quaking earth and falling buildings.**
  - **Sir William Ramsay** notes: *“Many of the inhabitants remained outside the city living in huts and booths over the vale, and those who were foolhardy enough (as the sober-minded thought) to remain in the city, practiced various devices to support and strengthen the walls and houses against the recurring shocks. The memory of this disaster lived long ... people lived amid ever threatening danger, in dread always of a new disaster; and the habit of going out to the open country had probably not disappeared when the Seven Letters were written.”*<sup>2</sup>
  - **This constant fear of the day of trial, when the citizens must flee for their lives, made the language employed by Christ very striking.** (Verses 10-12.) He encouraged His people with the promise that if faithful they would one day enter the New Jerusalem, the city of God, where they could dwell safely and **“go out no more.”**
- The district was vine growing, the most important cult of the city had to do with the worship of the god of wine, **Dionysus**.
  - **Quite naturally, drunkenness was a chronic social problem in the district.”**
- **The church’s vigorous missionary activity won many Jews of the city, resulting in the violent opposition of the local Jewish populace.**

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<sup>2</sup> (The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia [Albany, Oreg.: AGES Software; reprint of the 1904 edition], 316–17)



- The city was so named by its founder (King Attalus of Pergamum) in honor of his brother, and was located about twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis. It still survives today as the town of Alasehir. <sup>3</sup>
- The chief opposition to the faithful little church is from the Jews. <sup>4</sup>

**7** “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,  
 ‘These things says **He who is holy**,  
 He who is true,  
 “He who has the key of David,  
 He who opens and no one shuts,  
 and shuts and no one opens”:

**“He who is holy”** <sup>5</sup>

- **“Hagios** characterizes Jesus, not so much as the sinless one, but as one especially set apart, belonging exclusively to God.” <sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 70.

<sup>4</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 3:7.

<sup>5</sup> **88.24 hagios**: ἅγιος<sup>a</sup>, α, ον; ὁσιος<sup>a</sup>, α, ον; ὁσίως: pertaining to being holy in the sense of moral qualities and possessing certain essentially divine qualities in contrast with what is human—‘holy, pure, divine.’

ἅγιος<sup>a</sup>: κατὰ τὸν καλέσαντα ὑμᾶς ἅγιον καὶ αὐτοὶ ἅγιοι ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ γενήθητε, διότι γέγραπται ὅτι Ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός εἰμι ‘be holy in all that you do, just as he who called you is holy, because it is written, Be holy because I am holy’ 1 Pe 1:15–16.

ὁσιος<sup>a</sup>: κύριε ... ὅτι μόνος ὁσιος ‘Lord ... for you **alone** are holy’ Re 15:4.

ὁσίως: ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν ‘our conduct toward you who believe was holy and right and without fault’ 1 Th 2:10. (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 744.)

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 273.

- This title is applied to יהוה' [Yahweh] in the OT (Isa. [6:3](#); [40:25](#); [43:15](#)). The holiness of Jesus is a reflection of his identification with the Father in the Godhood. "I and My Father are one" (John [10:30](#)).
  - See the deity of Christ (Trinity) in this:

**Isaiah 6:3-4**

**3** And they were calling to one another:

**"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;**

the whole earth is full of his glory."

**4** At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. <sup>7</sup>

**Revelation 3:12** "The one who conquers, **I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, . . .**"

**Isaiah 40:25** "To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.

**Isaiah 43:15** I am the LORD, **your Holy One**, The Creator of Israel, your King."

## He who is truth:

- God cannot lie
- Everything He promises are faithful and true
- He NEVER changes His mind – there is NO negotiations with GOD.

**Numbers 23:19** God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of humankind, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? And has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

**Psalm 33:4–5**

**4** For the word of the LORD is right,

**And all His work is done in truth.**

**5** He loves righteousness and justice;

The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

**8** "I know your works.

**See, I have set before you an open door,  
and no one can shut it;**

for you have a little strength, have kept My word,  
and have not denied My name.

<sup>7</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Is 6:3–4.

## Open doors:

- Imagine – GOD has placed “open doors” before you!
  - LORD – show me the doors You have opened for me!
- At the end of our life here God has opened a door for you to enter that will be the most beautiful door you have ever seen!

ὁ ἀνοίγων καὶ οὐδὲς κλείσει [ho anoigōn kai oudes kleisei]: **“the one presently opening and no one shall shut”**.

**He is actively holding open the door such that no one else can shut it.** <sup>8</sup>

**Revelation 3:7 (NIV)** “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 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.** <sup>9</sup>

- In view of Jesus’ subsequent promise to the overcomer, “I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world” (Rev. 3:10), **perhaps this door that is held open and which no man can shut is a sure pathway to heaven for the faithful at the time of the Rapture:**
  - **The word “church” is not used after Chapter 5 of Revelation, it’s as if the “church” has vacated the earth!**

### **Revelation 4:1**

**1** After these things I looked, **and behold, a door standing open in heaven.** And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

- Therefore, Christ also assures them that it is He alone who can open and shut doors of witness and service. <sup>10</sup>

**Isaiah 22:22** The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; **So he shall open, and no one shall shut;**

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\\_of\\_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/03.html#Revelation%203%3A7](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/03.html#Revelation%203%3A7)

<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Re 3:7.

<sup>10</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 70.

**And he shall shut, and no one shall open.**

## Closed Doors:

- **Thank you, Jesus for closed doors in my life!**

κλειών καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνοίγει [kleiōn kai oudeis anoigei]: **“while presently shutting and no one is presently opening”.**

**He is actively shutting things which are to remain shut.**

- Man must respond while the door is held open by God for once it is shut, there is no other means of entry:

**Mat. 25:10** And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; **and the door was shut.**

**Luke 13:25** When once the Master of the house has risen up **and shut the door,** and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from.’

## “A little strength”

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

**9** And He said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

**10** **Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.**

**For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

**9** Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

- ψεύδονται [pseudontai], present tense, middle voice: **they themselves are presently lying. They are making this ongoing claim themselves.** <sup>11</sup>
  - **I will make them** (ποιήσω αὐτοὺς [poiēsō autous]). **Future active indicative** of ποιεῶ [poiēō], resuming the prophecy after the parenthesis (τῶν—ψευδονται [tōn—pseudontai], which say—but do lie). <sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book\\_of\\_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/03.html#Revelation%203%3A10](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/03.html#Revelation%203%3A10)

<sup>12</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 3:9.

**10** Because you have kept My command to **persevere**,

I also will keep you **from the hour of trial** which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

### Persevere

- **ὑπομονή, ἥς, ἡ (ὑπομένω)** hupomonés, fem. noun from hupoménō (5278),
  - **the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance.**
    - the act or state of patient waiting for someone or something, expectation. <sup>13</sup>
  - to persevere, remain under. A bearing up under, patience, endurance as to things or circumstances. <sup>14</sup>
    - Arndt and Gingrich hold that the word hupomone sometimes meant '(patient) expectation.'
    - One thing in favor of this view is Christ's exclamation in Rev. 3:11+, '**Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast.**' <sup>15</sup>

### From:

- **ἐκ**, before vowels **ἐξ**, prep. w. gen. (Hom.+; s. lit. s.v. ἀνά and εἰς beg.)
  - marker denoting separation, from, out of, away from. <sup>16</sup>
- **Which is it?**
  - Are Christians to be:
    - **Kept from**
      - Removed from, not to experience at all?
    - **Kept through it**
      - Separated from – kept safe, harbored, provided for?

A large body of discussion attends this phrase. The debate centers on whether *from* (ἐκ [ek]) here denotes *out of* or *through*. Is the promise to keep the church *out of* the trial or to preserve it *through* the trial?

- Proponents of the *kept through* view observe other passages where ἐκ [ek] can have this meaning.<sup>13</sup> They also observe examples in Scripture where God's people are protected in the midst of God's judgment:

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<sup>13</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1040.

<sup>14</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord Come* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 209-210.

<sup>16</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 295.

On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark. (Gen. [7:13](#))

Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt. (Ex. [12:13](#))

Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain. (Isa. [26:20-21](#))

“Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” . . . They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. [7:3+](#); [9:4+](#))

- Proponents of the **kept from** view point to the fact that the most natural use of  $\epsilon\kappa$  [*ek*] indicates *out of* and that if the alternate meaning were in view, another more suitable preposition would have been used.<sup>59</sup> **They too can point to passages which support their view—where the faithful are removed prior to God's judgment:**

And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him. (Gen. [5:24](#))

And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it?” . . . Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.” (Gen. [18:23-32](#))

And he said to him, “See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. (Gen. [19:21-22](#))

- **The problem cannot be solved simply by appeal to similar passages since both models of protection are found in Scripture.** This is because saints occupying different roles in history find themselves in different situations with regard to what God is doing in their midst. There is not a “one size fits all” approach to how God chooses to protect the faithful: at the time of Noah's flood, Enoch “walked with God and he *was* not, for God took him” (Gen. [5:24](#)), yet Noah and his family were preserved *through* the flood within the Ark (Gen. [7:13](#)). **We believe that by these typological examples, God is teaching us that some saints will be raptured whereas others—who come to faith later—will be protected in the midst of His wrath.**
- But, the simple answer to the question at hand is found by reading the promise more carefully, for the promise is not to be kept from *the trial*, but from *the hour of trial*. The church will not even experience the trial for it will be *kept from the hour* when the trial is visited upon the earth.

Christ promised to keep these church saints from the *time period* characterized by the testing Christ had in mind. If the Lord had meant that He would keep them from just the testing itself, He could have made that very clear by omitting the words ‘the hour’ and simply saying, ‘I will keep you from the testing.’<sup>60</sup>

- When the all-important word *hour* is factored into the discussion, it becomes clear that the promise relates to the *time* of trial and not its effects. “When Jesus in his human nature prayed ‘remove this cup from me [Mark [14:36](#); Luke [22:42](#)],’ and the parallel or equivalent request, ‘save me from this hour [John [12:27](#)],’ he was not praying to be spared during the hour, but to be kept from it, which settles the meaning of the expression here.”<sup>61</sup> Too often, commentators fail to grasp this important distinction. For example:

It is far from clear that the removal of Christians from the earth would be the only possible way in which Jesus could *keep* His people *from* **the wars and plagues** anticipated to occur at that time. [emphasis added]<sup>62</sup>

- But this line of reasoning is flawed because the verse says nothing about being kept from *wars and plagues*—the promise is to be kept from the *hour* or *time*. A serious problem with the *kept through* view is that God’s promise is of little merit in view of the fact that Scripture records multitudes of the faithful will suffer violent death during this period (Dan. [7:21+](#), [25+](#); [8:24+](#); Rev. [7:9-16+](#); [12:11+](#); [13:7+](#); [20:4+](#)):<sup>63</sup>

Even if the church saints were to be shielded from the testing of God’s wrath will bring on the earth in the period of testing Christ had in mind, the Scriptures (Rev. [6:9-11+](#); [13:7+](#), [15+](#); [20:4+](#)) make it clear that many of the saints alive on the earth during that period will be martyred by unbelievers. Thus, even though they will not be put to death by God’s wrath, they will still experience violent death as if they had not been shielded from God’s wrath. This militates against the answer that Christ will shield or protect the saints in or through that period of testing.<sup>64</sup>

This verse does not say that the Church will be merely kept safe *during* the trial, but it will be kept *from the very hour* of trial, that is, from the very *time* of it. This requires a removal before the Tribulation ever occurs. If Revelation [3:10+](#) means that the Church will be kept safe during the Tribulation, then something goes terribly wrong. Throughout the Tribulation, saints are being killed on a massive scale (Rev. [6:9-11+](#); [11:7+](#); [12:11+](#); [13:7+](#), [15+](#); [14:13+](#); [17:6+](#); [18:24+](#)). If these saints are Church saints, they are *not* being kept safe and Revelation [3:10+](#) is meaningless. Only if Church saints and Tribulation saints are kept distinct does the promise of Revelation [3:10+](#) make any sense.<sup>65</sup>

- This *hour of trial* is said to *come upon the whole world* (see below) and cannot relate to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as some hold for there was no need to protect the Philadelphian church from events hundreds of miles distant which had offered no direct physical threat to Asia Minor. This promise relates to a unique time of trial yet future that all believers shall escape due to their participation in the [Rapture](#). In this, the passage has in common a typological and future application like that of Revelation [2:20-22+](#) where *Jezebel* is cast into *great tribulation*.

**11 Behold, I am coming quickly!**

**Hold fast** what you have, that no one may take your crown.

**Quickly:**

- Not just soon, **unexpectedly** is the intention.

**Revelation 22:7**

7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

**Revelation 22:12**

12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

**Revelation 22:20**

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Jesus, once again, calls on His church to "Hold fast"

**Hebrews 2:1-3**

1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, **so that we do not drift away.**

2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,

**3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?**

**12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.**

**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 I will write on him My new name.**

A pillar

- Symbolic of our permanent placement in Heaven.

God will write UPON you:

- The Father's Name
  - That which has been forbidden to say is now known by you intimately
- The Name of the Father's City
- Jesus' new Name

**Revelation 21:2**

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

**13** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

- Listening yet?

### **Matthew 25:1–13**

**1** “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

**2** Now five of them were wise, and **five were foolish.**

**3** Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,

**4** but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

**5** But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

**6** “And at midnight a cry was heard:

‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’

**7** Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

**8** And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

**9** But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’

**10** And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; **and the door was shut.**

**11** “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’

**12** But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

**13** **“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.**