

Philadelphia suffered a massive earthquake in 17 AD. The Roman emperor removed the requirement for the city to pay tribute for a period of 5 years so it could recover and rebuild.

- Out of gratitude, the city fathers renamed Philadelphia, Neo-caesarea.
- In the 80's A.D. the city also added a new name, Flavia, to Philadelphia, to honor the imperial dynasty.

In 92 A.D. the city's relationship with Rome soured. Rome was in the middle of a famine and needed grain to feed their armies. The Emperor Domitian issued an imperial edict demanding that half of the grapevines in Philadelphia be destroyed and that no new ones were to be planted. The vineyards were the backbone of Philadelphia's economy.

Philadelphia was a center of the worship of the god of wine and revelry—Dionysus.

- Dionysus, born of a virgin on Dec. 25, performed miracles and was resurrected.
- He was known as the king of kings and alpha and omega.

Why did he do this? It was to encourage the farmers to grow grain on those now empty fields. Grain was a much cheaper crop and would never produce the same revenue as the grapes. Perhaps the Emperor had a far more sinister motive and that was to protect the vineyards in Italy from the excellent grapes that were grown in the city of Philadelphia.

Regardless, this decision was disastrous for Philadelphia because it would take years for those grapevines to grow back. They felt deeply betrayed by the Roman government. It is significant that Philadelphia's relationship with Rome soured just before this letter was written.

The early Christians in Philadelphia also felt betrayed by the authorities. How significant to receive a letter from Jesus saying, "I am the Holy and True One." He would do them no wrong and He would be absolutely faithful to them. Never neglect or betray them.

Rev. 3:7-11 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":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."⁹ Behold I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and worship before your feet, & to know that I have loved you 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.

¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Key To Text: Understand The Jewish Opposition To The Christians

Rev. 2:9b I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not,
but are the Synagogue Of Satan. [church at Smyrna]

Rev. 3:9a Behold, I will make them of the Synagogue Of Satan,
which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; [church at Philadelphia]

Synagogue of Satan: Group of devout, unbelieving Jews whom Jesus called Liars & Blasphemers.

- Strongly resisted the Gospel and opposed the Church
- Denied and opposed the fact that Gentiles were loved by God in the person of Jesus Christ. You are not part of God's believing community.

Note Rev. 3:9b Behold, I will make them [Synagogue of Satan; say they are Jews, but are not]
to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Note: More crime, evil and persecution have been perpetrated in the name of religion and by the religious, self-righteous type than almost any other one source of evil.

Religion is Satan's trump card. Religious persecution by religious Jews operating under Satan's control whether they realized it or not.

Synagogue of Satan: They say they are Jews, but they are not.

They were literal Jews, physical descendants of David and Abraham, but in claiming to be Jews they were also claiming to be God's people, religious guides to the truth, and the means and access to God. The Apostle Paul comments on what constitutes a true child of Abraham.

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Romans 9:6-8 He makes the clear distinction between racial Israel and regenerate Israel.

⁶But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; ⁷ neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants [offspring] will be named."

⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God,
but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. [counted as offspring]

They were not children of God regardless of their claims and religiosity. They had rejected God's Son and revelation of God. They were of their father the Devil, as Christ plainly told them. To be a true Jew in the Biblical sense one had to have the hope and faith of Abraham who was the possessor of faith in the promises of God to him and faith in the coming Messiah.

1. Rev. 3:7 These things saith He that is holy, He that is true,

Note: This statement is the diametric opposite of unbelieving Judaism which states that Jesus is not the true Messiah.

Mark 3:22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub,
and by the prince of the devils casts he out devils.

Note: Although the religious Jews observed and heard of the miracles of Jesus, they ascribed his miracles and power to Satan.

John 8:41 "You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him,
"We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."

- They challenge the birth of Jesus Christ. Imply He is not holy.

Luke 1:35b Therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

John 9:27 Who is this Jesus who has given this man sight?

His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue.

2. Jesus is the True One: However, to the religious Jews, Jesus was a deceiver.

Matt. 27:63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'

3. Jesus holds the Key of David Rev. 3:7b

The Jewish religious leaders saw themselves as the "gate keepers" who have the key to the entrance to the kingdom of God. They have closed the gate to the Gentiles.

John 7:12-13 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him:
for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceives the people.

¹³ However, no one spoke openly of Him [Jesus] for fear of the Jews.

Why did they fear the Jews? The religious Jews claimed they had the keys to the Kingdom.

John 9:34 They answered and said to him, [man born blind whom Jesus healed]

"You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

- In their minds, they doomed him to eternal damnation.

Rev. 1:18 I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Rev. 3:7-8 These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens;

⁸ 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.

Acts 14:27 end of 1st missionary journey; giving their report of what our Lord had done.

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

I Cor. 16:8-9 God opens the door for Paul' effective service. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.⁹ For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

II Cor. 2:12 God opens the door for ministry opportunity for Paul. Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord.

Col. 4:3 God opens the door for the preaching of the Gospel.

At the same time pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

The Doors our Lord opens lead to evangelistic opportunities for the Gentiles in spite of what the Jews are saying and doing.

Acts 18: Paul departs Athens and comes to Corinth and begins to work with Priscilla & Aquila making tents. Paul taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Then Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. Paul began teaching the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

18:6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

18:9-10 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid [stop being afraid], but speak, and hold not thy peace: ¹⁰ For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

Opposition will come. Jesus is not finished winning people to faith in Himself.

Is there little strength on their part? Yes! Jesus said, "I opened the door."

Jesus is the Holy One, the True One, the gatekeeper. Walk through it.

In 110 A.D. Ignatius visited the city. He wrote a letter in which he discussed the problems the church was facing from that very powerful, influential Jewish community that was antagonistic toward the church.

Open doors, shut doors? The early Christians had been kicked out of the synagogue and the door had been slammed and shut behind them.

Background: Jews who had been persecuted because they became Christians fled to Asia Minor and settled in the little towns. They would build a synagogue where they could meet and worship. They preached the Gospel, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and taught that He was the true Messiah. Their evangelistic fervor brought others to Christianity.

In the early times of the Roman Empire, Jews were exempt from saying, "Caesar is lord."

- There was a register in the synagogue which listed the names of the Jews.
- If your name was on the list, you were exempt.

If you accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Savior...

- They were excluded from the synagogue and not allowed to come in.
- Christians names would be struck from the registry.
- Their names were now off the rolls in the synagogue which put their lives at risk.

When Roman officials came and examined the registry, the Jews who became Christians - - their lives were at stake. Betrayed by the Jewish authorities.

Rev. 3:8b for thou hast a little strength, little power

- God delights in using the weak and powerless. Gideon's army.

I Cor. 1:27-28 But God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something, ²⁹ so that no one can boast in his presence.

It is all about Jesus. They are weak, they are few, the opposition is great. Group of Christians struggling but have remained faithful to His Word and have not denied His name. He is going to do great things through them. When He opens the door, He will prevail.

Jesus Commends Them:

Rev. 3:8 And have kept My word. This was the secret to their lives and ministry [Heb. 4:12].

Keeping God's Word and keeping our hearts dependent on and close to Him go hand in hand.

Prov. 4:20-23 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

²¹ Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

²² For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

²³ Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Kept =Greek threw: to watch over, guard, keep, preserve, give heed to pay attention

- To observe especially of the Law, or the Word, or teaching.

They were committed to Christ's Word or the Word about the Savior to preserve it from false ideas and adulterations. They were also committed to observing its truth in their lives.

Rev. 3:8 "And have not denied My Name." This speaks of their spiritual fidelity and separation from the world. Remember, one may confess the Lord with his mouth and yet, in some way, deny Him with a life that is inconsistent with the truth of Scripture or the character of Christ.

Rev. 3:9 Behold 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 because you have kept My command to persevere.

Think of Joseph: betrayed by his brothers and put in the path of death.

- Religious Jews put Christians in the path of death.

Years later, the brothers show up in Egypt where Joseph is now a ruler.

- They bow their knees before him and begging him for bread and sustenance.

Were the words of Joseph ringing in the heads of these Jewish Christians,
"you meant it to me for evil but God meant it for good.?"

Rev. 3:10 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.

I Thess. 1:8-10 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and

- to wait for His Son from [ek] heaven,
- whom He raised from [ek] the dead, that is
- Jesus, who rescues [delivers] us from [ek] The Wrath To Come.

Greek preposition "ek" = from, from out of, denotes origin

- Believers were waiting for Jesus to come FROM [ek = #1537] heaven
- The One who was raised FROM [ek = #1537] the dead
- This same person would deliver them FROM [ek = #1537] the Wrath To Come.
 - ❖ Completeness of our rescue by Christ; we are rescued out of the time of distress.
 - ❖ Hide the church safely out of the way before God visits His wrath on the earth

Paul portrays Jesus as coming for His church, to deliver believers from the

- "wrath that is To come."

Deliverance from the wrath that is to come is linked with the coming of Jesus from Heaven.

- The verse says believers will be delivered from this wrath by the Lord's coming.
- His coming is not what delivers believers from the wrath of hell.
- It is the coming of the Son from heaven that delivers us from the wrath to come.
- The only way His coming from heaven can deliver us from the wrath to come is if He removes us from it.

Deliver = rhuomai = strong word that carries the meaning of rescuing from danger or destruction by a forcible act

I Thess. 5:9-11 For God hath not appointed us to wrath,
but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who died for us, that, whether we Wake Or Sleep, we should live together with Him.

¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Question: What wrath is in view? THE WRATH to come - not just any wrath

Context: I Thess. contains frequent references to the Lord's coming.

- This wrath is eschatological [end-times] wrath.

Blue Letter Bible: The passage makes clear that the wrath signifies the calamities to be visited by God upon men when the present period of grace is closed. As to whether the ek here denotes "out of the midst of" or "preservation from," this is determined by the statement in I Th. 5:9, that "God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation."

The context there shows that the salvation is from the wrath just referred to.

- The wrath to come associated with the Day Of The Lord

I Thess. 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath,
but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

- Believers have an appointment with salvation [deliverance] not wrath.

Walvoord: In this passage he is expressly saying that our appointment is to be caught up to be with Christ. The appointment for the world [unbelievers] is for the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath. One cannot keep both appointments. We made our appointment for salvation and rescue when we trusted Christ as our personal Savior from sin. He is the One who bore our judgment and God's wrath on the cross. Jesus Christ bore for us all the divine judgment necessary for our salvation. He has promised that we shall never taste any of God's wrath.

Significant: When Jesus pronounced the promise in Rev. 3:10, 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. He said, in Rev. 3:11 Behold, I am coming quickly;
hold firmly to what you so that no one will take your crown.

How do you know it is referring to the future?

- It talks about judgment, rewards and crown.
- Judgment that happens in heaven immediately following the rapture.
- This judgment of rewards is always connected to the imminent return of Christ.

The charge here is to "hold fast," a warning against spiritual carelessness and carnality. The warning reminds us to live in the light of His coming and to hold fast to Him in faith and service. For when He comes it will mean examination and rewards.

He will not forget our service on His behalf, but we must hold fast to the hope and expectation of His coming for us or we will live carelessly, indifferently to our calling and purpose as believers. When that happens, we lose our crowns, rewards for faithful service.

They had kept Christ's word. They had not denied His name. If they failed to hold fast to what they had and if they stopped before their race was over, they risked losing their reward. We must persevere faithfully to the very end of life to keep our reward. Keep on enduring in faithfulness. Keep His word, obey His word, fulfill the duties He's given you. Live in love and loyalty to Him, waiting for His return. Don't stop until the day you take your last breath or Christ returns. You don't have to be great, showy, powerful, influential, important, well known. All you have to be is known to Christ as one who is faithful.

Promises To Those Who Overcome

Rev. 3:12 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.

Note: Jesus uses the words "My God" four times. It seems He is linking Himself with God the Father. The religious Jews did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God.

They only recognized God of the Old Testament. They tried to separate God from Jesus.

Those who overcome will enter into the blessings of My father because they have embraced Me.
Consider: Sometimes, it seems the opposition is winning. Jesus Promises Those who put down true Christians will come and bow down and acknowledge that I love you.
God embraced and drew Gentiles to Himself. Jesus is the Gatekeeper to the Kingdom.

Note: The religious Jews had an intensity about them regarding the Temple.
When they were testifying against Stephen, they said, "he speaks against this holy place."
What does Jesus promise those who overcome?

Rev. 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God,
and he shall go out no more.

Earthquakes: Built on the edge of a plain called "The Burned Land," it was backed by volcanic cliffs which made the land rich and extremely fertile from the volcanic residue. Philadelphia was a very prosperous city until AD 17 when the worst earthquake recorded in history up to that time absolutely devastated 12 cities in the Lydian Valley including Philadelphia and Sardis.

The Greek writer Strabo says that the walls of the city were constantly cracked. The original major quake and the continuing pattern of aftershocks that continued for many years resulted in some odd behavior in the residents of Philadelphia.

- Most moved outside the city walls and chose to live in huts in the open country and commute to work in the city.
- They lived in fear that another earthquake would destroy their houses and families.
- Many took up farming because they were so concerned about living in the city.

The pagans carved images of their idols into the pillars of their temples. The temples and the pillars would collapse in ruin with earthquakes and disappear over time due to erosion.

Rev. 3:12a He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God,
➤ A pillar is a picture of stability, ornamentation, service and permanence.
➤ Scripture tells us the church is being built up.
➤ Each believer is like a little stone or brick in the building.

Eph. 2:20-22 because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

²¹ In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

I Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood,
to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

All believers are in the spiritual building and household of God

1. Unbelieving Judaism wanted to bar the gate for Gentiles.
2. The Jews believed the temple was for them only.
3. If any happen to slip in, make sure they feel like 2nd class Christians.

Jesus: not only will they be bricks in the building,
those who overcome will be pillars in the temple of My God.

What is the temple of My God?

Rev. 21:22 Now I saw no temple in the city [New Jerusalem],

because the Lord God—the All-Powerful and the Lamb are its temple.

Consider: The picture of being a pillar in the temple is just a metaphor for being in a stable permanent place in Christ's eternal kingdom.

The ones who overcome will be pillars as special rewards with a permanent position of honor, responsibility and service in the His Kingdom and Eternity.

Rev. 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.

Recall: After the earthquake in 70 A.D. many of the people moved outside the city and built temporary dwellings there.

These believers lived in a city where there was very little stability and permanence because of the frequent earthquakes and the economic disasters.

Their lives were always in upheaval and turmoil because of the persecution they endured.

Christ promised those who overcome: He will make them as pillars in God's presence.

Nothing will unsettle you, nothing will shake you, nothing will change your place, your position.

You will have permanent security inside the city of God.

You are secure in Christ and will forever be safe and secure in your eternal home in the presence of God forever. You will never again be forced from your home.

Those who overcome have a fixed eternal place of honor in the sanctuary of God.

- He will not go out from it anymore.

Christ Promises He Will Write On Every Overcomer Three New Names.

¹Rev. 3:12 And I will write upon him the Name Of My God.

Rev. 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him were 144,000, who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads.

- This is an expression of God's intimate love for His own.

God Marks His Own

Shows Possession

Protection

Shows His Love

Rev. 22:3-4 fast forward to the new heaven and the new earth

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

Bond-servant = #1401 *doulos* > is used with the *highest dignity* in the NT -

namely, of believers who *willingly* live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers.

²Rev. 3:12 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.

After the AD 17 earthquake, the emperor Tiberius sent financial aid to help Philadelphia rebuild. In order to honor him they adopted a new name, Neocaesarea, which means the city of the new Caesar, a name that was popular for about 30 years. About 50 years later they wanted to honor Emperor Vespasian whose name was Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus. So they adopted another new name and fortunately they shortened it and they called their city Flavia and they even had a temple there to worship him. He reigned for about 10 years between AD 69 and 79. So by 96 AD when this letter arrives at Philadelphia, the Lord's words are very meaningful to them when he promises to those who overcome to write upon them

➤ "the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem."

This imagery is likely borrowed from the Roman practice of citizenship in which you belonged to a specific city and your citizenship was tied to that city. Saul was called Saul of Tarsus. His Roman citizenship was tied to that town.

Interesting: Verses about Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom

Jer. 3:16-17 And it shall be in those days when you become numerous and are fruitful in the land," declares the Lord, "they will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor miss it, nor will it be made again. ¹⁷ At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the Lord,' and all the nations will assemble at it, at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord; and they will no longer follow the stubbornness of their evil heart.

Ezekiel 48:35 and the name of the city from *that day shall be*, The Lord is there.

- Jehovah-Shammah, meaning "Jehovah is there,"
- a name of God that signifies God's ever-present presence

³Rev. 3:12 And I will write upon him, My New Name.

This new name is going to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, a name that will somehow express the fullness of His glorious character.

In Rev.19:12 Description of Christ at His Second Coming

"His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems;
and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself."

The point isn't the identity of the new name or even its meaning. The main point is, Christ's new name and we will wear it too, we will be His.

I Cor. 2:9 What eye has not seen and ear has not heard and has not entered into the heart of man, [all that] God has prepared (made and keeps ready) for those who love Him [who hold Him in affectionate reverence, promptly obeying Him and gratefully recognizing the benefits He has bestowed].

The King is coming for a BRIDE who has made herself ready and is watching for His return.