

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

by William McCarrell

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## CHAPTER 7

### PHILADELPHIA - THE FUNDAMENTAL CHURCH

**"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; 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; 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. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:7-13)**

#### SUGGESTIVE STUDY OUTLINE

I. THE COMMAND TO WRITE. Vs. 7

II. THE CHURCH ADDRESSED -- PHILADELPHIA. Vs. 7

III. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SPEAKER (CHRIST). Vs. 7

1. He that is holy
2. He that is true
3. He that possesses the key of David
4. He that openeth
5. He that shutteth

IV. THE COMMENDATIONS OF WORKS. Vss. 8, 10

1. Kept CHRIST's word -- despite little strength. Vs. 8
2. True to CHRIST's name -- despite little strength. Vs. 8
3. Kept word of CHRIST's patience. Vs. 10

## V. THE COMFORT -- ENCOURAGEMENT. Vss. 7-12

1. Through what CHRIST is -- as Head of Church -- Holiness, truth, fulfillment of Davidic Covenant, enablement in service. Vs. 7.
2. Assurance of service - by the CHRIST-opened door. Vs. 8
3. Victory over opposition. Vs. 9
4. Identification with CHRIST proven. Vs. 9
5. Triumphant verification of faith. Vs. 9
6. Deliverance from world-wide tribulation. Vs. 10
7. CHRIST's soon coming. Vs. 11
8. Crown-reward prospect. Vs. 11
9. Eternal, heavenly blessings. Vs. 12

## VI. THE EXHORTATION. Vs. 11

1. Hold fast truth received.
2. Hold fast ground possessed

## VII. THE OVERCOMER'S REWARD. Vss. 10, 12

1. Kept from world-wide tribulation -- rapture -- Vs. 10
2. Made a pillar in temple of GOD -- an eternal testimony -- Vs. 12
3. Secured forever -- Go no more out -- Vs. 12
4. GOD's name -- Heavenly identification -- Vs. 12
5. New Jerusalem identification -- Heavenly rest -- Vs. 12
6. CHRIST's new name -- Indescribable bliss, glory, fulness -- Vs. 12
7. Heavenly home -- Eternal provision, protection, bliss -- Vs. 12

## VIII. THE APPEAL TO HEAR. Vs. 13

### **A SIGNIFICANT CHURCH**

The letter to the church at Philadelphia describes GOD's true church of any time, but especially during days preceding CHRIST's return. It describes genuine fundamentalism, -- past, present, and future. How significant that each letter in chapters two and three of Revelation contains rebuking censures except the letters to Smyrna, the suffering church (2:8-11) and Philadelphia, the church true to CHRIST during the last days (3:7-13). The Sardis and Laodicean Churches were, no doubt, an admiring sight for mankind, thus highly praised by man. The Smyrna and Philadelphia Churches while rejected by mankind, are a delight to CHRIST and thus praised by Him. Scripture arrangement significantly places the Philadelphia Church, GOD's true church, between Sardis, which pictures spiritually dead Protestantism, and the Laodicea, which pictures apostate latter-day modernism.

### **DOUBLY SUGGESTIVE NAME**

The church name, Philadelphia, strengthens the message delivered to and through it.

"**Philadelphia**" means "*brotherly love*" and also "*faithful remnant*." It reminds those contending for Faith once delivered at any time, and especially during last days, that such contending should be done in GOD-honoring love (I Corinthians 13). The letter encourages the church to contend earnestly for GOD's truth. The church name encourages the possibility of aggressively warring for CHRIST in GOD-honoring love. Certainly, such contending was exemplified by JESUS CHRIST (Matthew 23) and the Apostle Paul: "**But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed**" (Galatians 1:8-9). Many Christians have ceased properly contending for the Christian Faith because of wrong accusation as to acting in a bitter spirit. Enemies of CHRIST and GOD's truth continually specialize in clouding momentous Bible truths and issues involved in certain struggles, by making it appear that every one who stands for GOD's truth does so in a CHRIST-dishonoring spirit. Thus many of GOD's true people are side-tracked from consideration of, and standing for fundamental, momentous truths -- some of which even determine salvation.

How significant that the name, **Philadelphia**, also means "*faithful remnant*." This enlighteningly comforts CHRIST's true church. Those who lovingly proclaim GOD's truth and consistently live separate from that which displeases CHRIST may ever expect to be in the minority. Such proclamation and living will not be popular with the world. Man will estimate it a failure. Its faithfulness will be its success before GOD. The comforting remembrance of this truth will be increasingly needed as the coming of CHRIST for His Church draws nigh.

## **A WONDROUS SPEAKER**

The Philadelphia letter greatly strengthens its message through the description of CHRIST, its Speaker. He announces Himself as "**He that is holy**" (3:7). How encouraging for minorities living CHRIST-like at any time to remember His holiness! CHRIST's true and end-time church will be living in days of moral collapse described in such Scripture portions as II Timothy 3:1-13. JESUS likened these days unto days of Noah, Sodom, and Gomorrah (Luke 17:26-30). What encouragement the assurance of His holiness should be to those living in true holiness of life in the midst of the last days' seething caldron of sin. The expression, "**He that is holy**," assures judgment upon the awful iniquity so prevalent in last days. It warns the many who profess CHRIST and do not possess Him, that GOD is satisfied only with inner life holiness produced through possession of CHRIST. It warns of judgment upon the false teachers, especially those of the last days (II Peter 2). Many of these teachers often teach that righteousness is a sin and sin is right, thus being among those who turn the grace of GOD into lasciviousness (Jude 4). It most certainly includes any who deny JESUS' virgin birth and sinless humanity -- and all who would even insinuate, as many do, that He was born out of wedlock.

The speaker, CHRIST, is further described as "**He that is true**" (3:7). What warning this title conveys to every skeptic, infidel, atheist, apostate teacher, and unbeliever of any time, especially in those days preceding CHRIST's coming! What encouragement it conveys to saved ones at any time, especially those standing against the universal error, unbelief, and apostate teaching of last days! All unbelief revolves about CHRIST's person. If one can believe He is what the Bible sets Him forth to be, and that which He claims to be, it is easy to believe in His every promise and miraculous work. Despite all unbelief set forth through cults, skepticism, infidelity, atheism, and

modernistic apostate teaching, CHRIST ever remains GOD's truth. This title, "He that is true," preciously assures that His words as to salvation and heavenly bliss by grace through faith are true. It also solemnly warns that His words as to sin and its judgment, eternal punishment, and the lake of fire are equally true. His offers of earthly help, deliverance, victory and blessing are dependable. His promises as to His second coming and victorious earthly reign are as reliable as CHRIST Himself. His Word, the Bible, is everything CHRIST is.

## **POSSESSING THE KEY OF DAVID**

The Speaker, CHRIST, is further described as possessing the key of David (3:7). The Bible revolves about eight great covenants:

The Edenic Covenant -- Genesis 1:28  
The Adamic Covenant -- Genesis 3:15  
The Noahic Covenant -- Genesis 9:1  
The Abrahamic Covenant -- Genesis 15:18  
The Mosaic Covenant -- Exodus 19:25  
The Palestinian Covenant -- Deuteronomy 30:33  
The Davidic Covenant -- II Samuel 7:16  
The New Covenant -- Hebrews 8:8

The Davidic Covenant assures that CHRIST, the greater David and born of David's line, will return to and reign upon earth. It assures that this Millennial reign will be ministered from David's throne, (II Samuel 7; I Chronicles 17). Saved ones are thus reminded that their hopes for solution of earth's problems and deliverance from its sufferings and testings should be in CHRIST's fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant promises at His second coming. GOD purposes that this reminder safeguard His own from hoping for solution of earth's problems through human government, political parties, man-made programs, brain-trusts, also religious movements or denominations. They should ever remember that earthly Millennial blessing is only unlocked and released when CHRIST returns and fulfills the Davidic Covenant.

These truths should be especially precious to those in GOD's true church who are privileged to live for CHRIST during the last days. They indicate that CHRIST's true end-time church will be preponderantly pre-millennial. During a conversation in Chicago with Hon. Williams Jennings Bryan, the writer informed him of the thoughts expressed by a modernist who was a well-known college president. This modernist predicted that future days would witness just two outstanding churches; namely, the Modernist Church and the Pre-millennial Church. He reasoned that any one literally accepting Bible statements as to Scripture inspiration, atonement through JESUS' death and shed blood on Calvary, and His bodily resurrection must in fairness also literally accept the Bible's statements as to JESUS' bodily return to and reign upon earth. Confident that Modernists would eventually spiritualize and reject all these literal Bible statements, he predicted that this would merge them into one fellowship to be known as the Modernist Church. Realizing that those who believed in the pre-millennial coming of JESUS CHRIST did and would continue to accept literal Scriptural statements about CHRIST's person, death, resurrection, and second coming, he predicted that all such would be merged into one fellowship known as the pre-millennial Church. It becomes increasingly evident that Christians and churches that manifest interest in prayer, desire for GOD's Word, earnestness as to holy living,

separation from worldliness, and practice of evangelism and missions, believe in CHRIST's pre-millennial return to earth. It becomes increasingly apparent that religious individuals and churches that do not believe in CHRIST's pre-millennial return evidence lack of desire for the CHRIST-honoring characteristics mentioned above and supplant the same with worldliness. Daily the lines are more definitely drawn. The separating gulf becomes increasingly impassable. In the same conversation the writer reminded Mr. Bryan that practically every preacher who has denied the Christian faith professed to believe in that line of Bible interpretation known as "Post-millennialism." The writer also reminded that practically every preacher who was opposing Mr. Bryan in his advocacy of Bible inspiration, the Virgin Birth, death of CHRIST for sin, and His bodily resurrection, found his fellowship in a post millennial group of preachers, never in a pre-millennial group. Mr. Bryan replied, "I never thought of it before. It is true, isn't it?"

### **THE OPEN DOOR THAT NO MAN SHUTTETH**

The Speaker in the Philadelphia letter is further described as "He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (3:7). CHRIST opened the way from darkness to light, from sorrow to comfort, from despair to hope, from the grave to resurrection, and then into heaven. How comforting for GOD's own to be reminded at any time of CHRIST's ability to pen and close. How especially comforting will this reminder be for those standing true to CHRIST during last testing days. These days will be marked by collapse of church activity and closing of spiritual service opportunity. Many Satanic forces will unite in bringing this to pass. Opposition of religious leadership, strengthened by a united program with civil government and aided by individual heart-hardening, will be an effective factor. The development of such opposition can be discerned continually. It functions strongly through denominationalism and church federations, especially when their leadership is combined with governmental, dictatorial policies.

This opposition can be seen increasing in strength through present-day [1946] indifferentism to Bible truth and living; also, through individual unbelief regarding the same. How comforting in these days to be reminded that, despite all opposition, CHRIST can open doors of service; -- also, hardened hearts to believe and be saved. However, how solemn the warning that the CHRIST Who can and does open these fields and hearts also closes. This same truth should comfort those opposed by present-day spirit of Antichrist, especially as it intensifies opposition through various means, including religious denominations and federations. The enlightenment and spiritual conform conveyed in the assurance of CHRIST's ability to open and close will increase in proportion as true believers approach the day of tribulation, Antichrist, and JESUS' return to earth. How graphically this truth is demonstrated in present days! When seminaries in general departed from GOD's truth, CHRIST raised up Bible institutes. When denominational mission boards closed opportunities of service to Biblical servants at home and abroad, CHRIST raised up Christian fundamental movements and faith missions. During present world-wide financial depression, CHRIST permits many fields and churches, corrupted by Modernism, to close -- which, at later times, are opened for Gospel and Bible truth ministry.

### **CHRIST-COMMENDED CHARACTERISTICS**

CHRIST's commendations of the Philadelphia Church are enlightening. He knows and recognizes its works, though they be belittled and unappreciated by mankind (3:8). Study of the Philadelphia Church discovers characteristics and standards necessary for any individual or

church desiring to count for CHRIST. Such a church's power does not depend upon wealth, property, or human prestige. Though in the minority and insignificant in many's estimation, it faithfully and effectively protests against empty religious ritualism, apostasy, and sin. Its rebuking protest is strengthened by separation from CHRIST-dishonoring weaknesses and sins, especially when manifested in latter-day religious realms.

Though humanly limited, this church dedicates everything to CHRIST. Its dedication is evidenced by stewardship of time, talents, means, and life. This dedication is further evidenced by alertness in grasping service opportunities and in conduct of world-wide missionary work (3:8). It keeps CHRIST's Word. It does not permit human reason, denominational ecclesiasticism, minister, priest, or pope to displace, supplant, or supersede the bible. While Satan would corrupt the Bible, the Critics subtract from it, Roman Catholicism add to it, Protestantism neglect it, Modernism supplant it, and the world reject it, GOD's true church loves, reads, desires, studies, treasures, obeys, and defends it. It does not deny CHRIST's name. CHRIST's name, person, and work are inseparable.

A church true to CHRIST's name will witness to His miraculous incarnation, blood-wrought atonement, bodily resurrection, heavenly intercession, earthly return, and personal deity. This church keeps the word of CHRIST's patience. This expression suggests belief in CHRIST's second coming promises. While patiently awaiting His return, the church commits its sufferings and persecutions to Him: "**Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God**" (I Corinthians 4:5) and "**And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come**" (I Thessalonians 1:10).

Living amidst confusion and temptations produced by unbiblical schemes, plans, world-programs, and religion minus spirituality, it believes and declares that the coming of the One Whom it loves, worships, and serves is the only solution of all earth's problems and needs. In days cursed by exaltation of man, GOD's true church centers upon, is occupied with, and glories in a living, triumphant, coming and glorified CHRIST: "**And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming**" (I John 2:28). During last days of moral collapse, it manifests holiness wrought by an indwelling CHRIST. During confusing, distracting, disappointing and turbulent world and religious conditions, it rests in CHRIST. While misrepresented, misunderstood, wronged, and falsely accused, it commits its case to CHRIST. His pre-millennial coming is its hope: "**And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure**" (I John 3:3). While material riches become dross, attractive worldly allurements fade, worldly honors prove a sham, and human life passes as vapor this church finds CHRIST sufficient. In spirit and in truth, CHRIST is its "**All, and in all**" (Colossians 3:11).

## **SATANIC OPPOSITION**

The Philadelphia letter reminds that any true church at any time, and especially during last days, meets Satanic opposition. This opposition is solemnly pictured as "**The synagogue of Satan**" (3:9). It suggests opposition through imitation, religious ritualism, and hypocrisy -- opposition strengthened by mixture of worldliness and religiousness, -- Church and State. These opponents

often brazenly and shallowly claim to be Christians, notwithstanding denial of GOD's Word, GOD's Son, and refusal of GOD's salvation in CHRIST, they oppose Bible truth which presents GOD's grace in CHRIST as the exclusive means of salvation, spiritual growth, and service. This opposition, as Galatianism of old, teaches salvation, spiritual growth, and service, by works, ethics, character and religiousness: **"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain"** (Galatians 2:21). The description of this opposition further suggests something subtle, mysterious, supernatural, and Satanic, -- often functioning through demonism.

The works of CHRIST's true church are usually hindered by a Post-millennial program, though such program may be rendered in religious sincerity. Through lack of Bible knowledge, it becomes so allied with mere human methods, movements, also worldliness, that it often consciously or unconsciously strengthens works opposed to GOD's truth and CHRIST's cause. Modernism could never have done its deadly work in professing Christianity were it not for the preparatory work of Post-millennialism. Satan anaesthetized as it were, the church in general through Post-millennialism, and while it slept spiritually, so operated as to deeply implant the deadly poison of present-day Modernism.

At times the post-millennial program constitutes open opposition to the God-given program of His true church. CHRIST's genuine last-days church contends for CHRIST through spiritual living, constructive service, and Biblical testimony to the deity, Virgin Birth, bodily resurrection, ascension, glorification, intercession and second coming of CHRIST. CHRIST encourages such contending by stating, **"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown"** (3:11). All opposition to CHRIST's cause will be exposed, rebuked, and judged at His second coming.

## **HEAVENLY COMFORT**

CHRIST encourages His tested true church with much precious assurance. He, its Head, is holy, true, and always sufficient to impart victory in every problem and trial (3:7). Its works are known and remembered and will be rewarded. Its ultimate victory is certain. He assuringly acknowledges it as His very own. Eight times in the Philadelphia letter one reads the pronoun, **"my."** What comfort is found in CHRIST's statement, **"I have loved thee"** (v. 9). He assures His church of future triumphant acknowledgement. This acknowledgment will prove their testimony and claims true regarding possessing CHRIST and His truth (3:9). He will reveal, acknowledge, and also reward His own at His coming. They will be His when He displays His jewels: **"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him"** (Mal. 3:16-17).

The glory they will share with CHRIST will cause Him to be admired by the universe: **"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall**

come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (II Thessalonians 1:7-10) and "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). At this same time, He will rebuke their opponents.

## **SPECIAL REWARD**

CHRIST assures this genuine, latter-day church that He will deliver it from the Great Tribulation (3:10). It will be caught away before the Tribulation and thus safeguarded from fearful, earth-wide suffering and judgment: "**And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it**" (Jeremiah 30:4-7); Daniel 12; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Revelation 6 through 19). This church anticipates the Blessed Hope -- not a fearful tribulation (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

## **REWARDS FOR OVERCOMERS**

CHRIST assures of desire and purpose to reward overcomers by exhorting that they so live that no one rob them of their crown: "**For other foundation can no man lay that that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire**" (I Corinthians 3:11-15). There is no danger of salvation being lost as it rests upon the eternally perfect work of CHRIST. However, reward can be missed by those saved through failure to overcome testing such as are presented in each letter of Revelation two and three, and especially in the letter addressed to the church at Philadelphia. CHRIST's words, "**That no man take thy crown**" (3:11), remind of the possibility and importance of gaining or losing --

1. The Incorruptible Crown for victory over fleshly desire and habits: "**And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible**" (I Corinthians 9:25)
2. The Crown of Life for live poured forth in daily living or in martyr death (2:10): "**Blessed in the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the LORD hath promised to them that love him**" (James 1:12).
3. The Crown of Rejoicing for Biblical Evangelism: "**For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?**" (I Thessalonians 2:19)
4. The Crown of Glory for giving forth GOD's Word: "**And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away**" (I Peter 5:4).

5. The Crown of Righteousness for proper attitude toward CHRIST's return: "**Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing**" (II Timothy 4:8).

The Philadelphia letter assures that overcomers will be made pillars in the Temple of GOD. In Apostolic Days, pillars were erected to rulers and generals with testimonies of their accomplishments chiseled upon them. In glory the overcomer will be a permanent testimony to victories through CHRIST's grace. CHRIST says that overcomers will "go no more out" (3:12). Thus they are assured that they will enter and eternally enjoy GOD's presence, enrichment, protection, provision, and rest. The statement "I will write upon him the name of my GOD" (3:12) assures of GOD's eternal acknowledgement and ownership, as well as eternal, intimate fellowship.

### **A NEW NAME**

The promise of their identity with the new Jerusalem, GOD's City, assures of an experience of eternal, heavenly peace surpassing all human comprehension. CHRIST further promises to write upon the overcomer a new name. When the Deity gives names in the Bible, the name usually is descriptive of certain work or blessing. The name that CHRIST gives is referred to as a NEW NAME. This peculiar expression, "**my new name**" (3:12), is used because it will describe heavenly enrichment and glory impossible for human phraseology to picture or human mentality to comprehend. CHRIST calls it "**My New Name**" because it will describe His fulness and glory. This fulness and glory will never be known until saved ones experience it when they see CHRIST and become like Him: "**Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is**" (I John 3:2).

### **LAST DAY EXHORTATIONS**

CHRIST's Church of the last days is exhorted to hold fast. It does so by maintaining spiritual standards and fellowship with CHRIST. It also holds fast by contending for such Biblical truths as Scripture inspiration, CHRIST's Deity, virgin birth, and bodily resurrection, also justification by faith, spiritual regeneration, Biblical sanctification, and heavenly glorification. It contends through genuine prayer, proper attitude toward and proclamation of GOD's Word, evangelism, holy living, missions, separation from worldliness, and preparation for CHRIST's coming. It is not exhorted to hold its salvation, as that is done by CHRIST, but it is exhorted to so believe, live, witness, and serve as to safeguard its crown reward.

Every saved one through new birth has been blessed with a spiritual ear and thus has personal responsibility to respond to CHRIST's exhortation, "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**" (3:13)

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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