

## RETURNING TO THE ORTHODOXY OF THE CHURCH

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

### The Church in Philadelphia

Scripture Reading: Rev. 3:7-13; 1 John 3:14

- I. **As a sign, the church in Philadelphia prefigures the church of brotherly love, the recovery of the proper church life, from the early part of the nineteenth century to the second appearing of the Lord—Rev. 3:7:**
  - A. Just as the reformed church, prefigured by the church in Sardis, was a reaction to the apostate Catholic Church, prefigured by the church in Thyatira, so the church of brotherly love is a reaction to the dead reformed church—v. 1; 2:18.
  - B. This reaction will continue as an anti-testimony to both apostate Catholicism and degraded Protestantism until the Lord comes back—3:11.
- II. **In Greek *Philadelphia* means “brotherly love”—v. 7:**
  - A. The components of the Greek word *Philadelphia* mean “to have affection for” and “a brother,” hence, a brotherly affection, a love characterized by delight and pleasure—2 Pet. 1:7.
  - B. In godliness, which is the expression of God, this love needs to be supplied for the brotherhood (1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; Gal. 6:10), for our testimony to the world (John 13:34-35), and for the bearing of fruit (15:16-17).
  - C. The church in Philadelphia prophetically depicts the church of brotherly love, that is, the proper church life—Rev. 3:7:
    1. The church of brotherly love was a reaction to the dead reformed church.
    2. The church of brotherly love started in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the brothers were raised up in England to practice the church life outside the system of sects and divisions, and it will continue until the Lord comes back—v. 11.
  - D. “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death”—1 John 3:14:
    1. To pass out of death into life is to pass out of the source, the essence, the element, and the sphere of death into the source, the essence, the element, and the sphere of life; this took place in us at our regeneration—John 3:3, 5-6; 5:24.
    2. Love (the love of God) toward the brothers is strong evidence that we have passed out of death into life—1 John 3:14:
      - a. Faith in the Lord is the way for us to pass out of death into life; love toward the brothers is the evidence that we have passed out of death into life.
      - b. To have faith is to receive the eternal life (John 3:15); to love is to live by the eternal life that we have received—1 John 5:13; 4:7.
      - c. Such unspeakable love can issue only from genuine faith:
        - 1) A person loves for no other reason than the fact that the other person is a brother.

- 2) There is an unspeakable feeling and taste toward each other; this feeling and taste are a proof that we have passed out of death into life.
- 3. Not loving the brothers is evidence that one is not living by the essence and element of the divine love and is not remaining in the sphere of that love—3:14b.
- 4. “In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers”—v. 16:
  - a. A love for the brothers is a willingness to lay ourselves aside to serve them—Gal. 5:13.
  - b. To love the brothers is to be willing to deny oneself for the perfection of others and to have a heart that is willing to lay down one’s own life for his brothers.

**III. “These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens”—Rev. 3:7:**

- A. To the church of brotherly love, the Lord is the Holy One, the true One, by whom and with whom the recovered church can be holy, separated from the world, and true, faithful, to God.
- B. To the church of brotherly love, the Lord is also the One who has the key of David, the key of the kingdom, with authority to open and shut—v. 7; Isa. 22:22:
  - 1. This is the key of the treasury of the house of God, which is typified by the house of David, for the building up of the kingdom of God—39:2; 2 Sam. 7:16:
    - a. The church is both God’s house and God’s kingdom—1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17.
    - b. The key of David is for the keeping of all the treasures of the house of God, which are all the riches of Christ for our enjoyment—Eph. 3:8.
  - 2. The key of David opens the whole universe for God—Isa. 22:22; Rev. 3:7:
    - a. As the greater David, Christ has built up the house of God, the real temple, and He has set up the kingdom of God, the dominion in which He exercises full authority to represent God; therefore, He holds the key of David—Matt. 1:1; 12:3-8; 16:18-19.
    - b. The fact that Christ has the key of David signifies that He is the center of God’s economy; He is the One who expresses God and represents Him, the One who holds the key to open everything in God’s dominion—Col. 1:15-18.

**IV. “I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name”—Rev. 3:8:**

- A. As the One who has the key of David and who opens and no one can shut, the Lord has given the recovered church “an opened door which no one can shut”:
  - 1. Through the years the Lord’s recovery has experienced the Lord as such a One.
  - 2. Since the recovery of the proper church life began in the early part of the nineteenth century, a door has always been opened wide to the Lord’s recovery.

3. Although many opposers have risen up against the Lord's recovery and have tried to shut the door, Christ is the One who has the key of David, and what He opens, no one can shut.
- B. One outstanding feature of the church in Philadelphia is that she keeps the Lord's word—v. 8:
    1. According to history, no other Christians have kept the Lord's word as strictly as the church in Philadelphia.
    2. The church in Philadelphia, the recovered church, does not care for tradition; she cares for the word of God—cf. Matt. 15:6b.
  - C. The church in Philadelphia keeps the Lord's word with the little power that she has—Rev. 3:8:
    1. We should not regard the church in Philadelphia as being strong, powerful, and prevailing; the Lord said that she had “a little power.”
    2. What pleases the Lord is not that we are strong but that we use our little power to do the best we can.
    3. Although the amount of grace we have received may be limited in its capacity, as long as we use it, spending it to do as much as we can to keep the Lord's word, He will be pleased—Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10.
  - D. In Revelation 3:8 the Lord says that the church in Philadelphia has not denied His name:
    1. The Lord's word is His expression, and the Lord's name is the Lord Himself.
    2. The recovered church not only has returned in a full way to the Lord's word but also has abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ.
    3. The recovered church belongs to the Lord absolutely, having nothing to do with any denominations (any names).
  - E. The deviation from the word to heresies and the exaltation of so many names other than that of Christ are the most striking signs of degraded Christianity—2:14-15, 20.
  - F. The return to the pure word from all heresies and traditions and the exaltation of the Lord's name by abandoning every other name are the most inspiring testimony in the recovered church—3:8.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE CHURCH'S CONDITION**

**Having a Little Power**

In Revelation 3:8 we see the condition of the church in Philadelphia. Firstly, this church had “a little power.” Many times we estimate the church in Philadelphia too highly, thinking that this church was strong and prevailing. Actually, it was not so. Some may think that when the Lord raised up the brothers in England one hundred fifty years ago, every one of them must have been like David. While we estimate the church in Philadelphia very highly, the Lord says that she had “a little power.” What pleases the Lord is not that we are strong, but that we use our little power to do the best we can. Do not try to be strong. The strong ones may not please the Lord as much as those who do their best with the little power they have. You can never surpass what the Lord gives you. Simply spend what you have received from Him. Do not usurp the Lord's grace. None among us can say that he has received nothing from the Lord. Even the least among us has received a certain amount of grace from Him.

You must spend that grace, using it to do your best. If you do this, the Lord will appreciate you and say, “Good. You have a little power, yet you have kept My word with the power you have.” Do not seek to be a giant. The Lord is not happy with giants; He is happy with the little ones who have an amount of grace. Although that grace may be limited in its capacity, as long as we use it, spending it to do as much as we can to keep the Lord’s word, He will be pleased.

### **Having Kept the Lord’s Word**

In verse 8 the Lord said that the church in Philadelphia kept His word. One outstanding feature of Philadelphia is that she kept the Lord’s word. According to history, no other Christians have kept the Lord’s word as strictly as these in the church in Philadelphia. Likewise, by His grace, we are keeping His word today. Although many condemn us, saying that we are heretical, among today’s Christians no one regards the Lord’s word more than we do. We keep the Word of God, not in the traditional way, but in the way of the pure Word. This offends those who want to hold the traditions of their forefathers. The church in Philadelphia does not care for tradition; she cares for the Word of God.

### **Having Not Denied the Lord’s Name**

In verse 8 the Lord also said that the church in Philadelphia did not deny His name. Since the brothers were raised up in England in the early part of the nineteenth century, they have not taken any name other than the name of the Lord. The word is the Lord’s expression, and the name is the Lord Himself. The apostate church has deviated from the Lord’s word and become heretical. The reformed church, though recovered to the Lord’s word to some extent, has denied the Lord’s name by denominating herself with many other names, such as Lutheran, Wesleyan, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist. The recovered church has not only returned to the Lord’s word in a full way, but has also abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The recovered church belongs to the Lord absolutely, having nothing to do with any denominations (any names). To deviate from the Lord’s Word is apostasy, and to denominate the church with any name other than the Lord’s is spiritual fornication. The church as the chaste virgin espoused to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2) should not have any name other than her husband’s. All other names are an abomination in the eyes of God. In the recovered church life we have no teachings of Balaam (Rev. 2:14), no teachings of the Nicolaitans (v. 15), no teachings of Jezebel (v. 20), and no mysterious doctrines of Satan (v. 24); we have only the pure Word of the Lord. Amen! The recovered church has no denominations (names) but the unique name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The deviation from the Word to heresies and the exaltation of so many names other than that of Christ are the most striking signs of degraded Christianity. The return to the pure Word from all heresies and traditions and the exaltation of the Lord’s name by abandoning every other name are the most inspiring testimony in the recovered church. This is why the church in the Lord’s recovery has the revelation and presence of the Lord and expresses the Lord in a living way, full of light and with the riches of life.

Because we have an all-sufficient name, the name above every name, we do not need the names Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or any other names. We have only one name—the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is a serious matter to take a name. Suppose you are Mrs. Smith. If you take the name of Mrs. Jones, it indicates that you have committed fornication. The church should have only one husband, only one name, the name of Jesus Christ. In the past, some friends in the denominations have asked me, “Why do you call yourselves the church? Why do you say that we are not the church?” I answered, “You call yourselves Presbyterian. Don’t blame me for this—you have designated yourself in this manner. If you are the church, why do you designate yourself

in this way? Are you Mrs. Smith? Then why do you call yourself Mrs. Jones? When I call you Mrs. Jones and say that I am Mrs. Smith, you are jealous. Don't blame me for this, for you have called yourself Mrs. Jones." After this, all their mouths were shut. Do not think that a name is a small thing. We are saved in the Lord's name. Besides His name, we should never take any other name. George Whitefield, a contemporary of John Wesley, once declared that besides the name of Jesus Christ he would have no other name. Although Whitefield was an Englishman, he renounced the name of the Church of England, not belonging to that name anymore. The church in Philadelphia does not deny the Lord's name; she has no name other than His.

Sometimes people have argued with us, saying, "We have never denied the Lord's name." We replied, "Yes, you have never denied His name, but you have taken another name in addition to and even above His name. Now you have two names. Why don't you drop the other name you have taken? If you would drop this other name, then we could be one. All other names cause divisions. You call yourself a Presbyterian. I hate that name because taking it makes me a fornicator. Since you like it and I hate it, if you still hold on to it, how can we be one? But if you drop this name, we shall immediately be one in the unique name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Some have said that the name on the outside of their so-called church building is merely an outward sign, and that they do not really care about it. If they do not care about it, then they should prove their honesty in this manner by removing that sign. But some have said that it is too difficult for them to do that because the "church" board would hinder them. To this I replied, "Then you must bear the responsibility for division."

### **Having an Open Door**

In 3:8 the Lord said, "Behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut." As the One who has the key of David and who opens and no one can shut, the Lord has given the recovered church "an opened door which no one can shut." Since the recovery of the proper church life began, in the early part of the nineteenth century, until now, a door has always been wide open to the Lord's recovery. The more that organized Christianity tries to shut the door, the wider it is open. In spite of much opposition, the door today is open worldwide. The key is in the hand of the Head of the church; it is not in the hand of the opposers. Hallelujah, we have an open door! During the past fifty years, the denominations have tried their best to close this door. But the more they attempted to shut it, the more the Lord has opened it. No one can deny that there is an open door for the Lord's recovery today. The Lord has the key. As long as we are in His recovery, the door will always be open to us. (*Life-study of Revelation*, pp. 186-189)

### **CHRIST AS THE HOLY ONE, THE TRUE ONE, WHO HAS THE KEY OF DAVID, WHO OPENS AND NO ONE WILL SHUT, AND SHUTS AND NO ONE OPENS**

Revelation 3:7 presents Christ as "the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens." To the church in Philadelphia, the church of brotherly love, the Lord is "the Holy One, the true One" by whom and with whom the church can be holy, separated from the world, and true, faithful, to God. In order to dispense life to others, He must be holy and He must be true. If we are not holy or true, we can never dispense life to others. When we enter into the Bible and see all the items of Christ's being, we can see that they are for the divine dispensing.

To the church in Philadelphia, the Lord is also the One who has "the key of David" (v. 7), the key of the kingdom, with authority to open and to shut. Here we need to consider the meaning of the term *the key of David*. According to Genesis 1, when God created man, He gave him dominion over all creatures. This indicates that in God's intention man is to be the

power representing God on earth. Due to the fall, however, man lost this power and has never fully recovered it. Man has not regained dominion on earth to represent God. In the lives of Adam, Abel, Enosh, Enoch, and Noah we do not see this power. Neither do we see it in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We do not see this power until God's chosen people, the children of Israel, entered into the good land and built the temple. Apparently, the temple was built by Solomon; actually, it was built by David, for he was behind the building of the temple. In Genesis 1:26 God made man in His own image that he might express Him and with His dominion that he might represent Him. The temple is related to God's image because, being God's house, it is His expression. The temple was built in the city. The temple signifies God's expression, and the city signifies God's dominion. The image and dominion revealed in Genesis 1 are, at least to some extent, fulfilled in the temple and the city. In the temple we have God's presence for His expression, and in the city we have God's dominion. God's king is in the city representing Him as he rules on earth.

This is a necessary background for understanding what the key of David is. The key held by David is the key of God's entire dominion. God's dominion includes the whole universe, particularly mankind. This dominion has a key which is possessed by the person who fought the battle for the kingdom and who made preparations for the temple. The name of this person is David. David represents God in establishing God's kingdom on earth. Hence, he has the key of God's dominion in the universe. David, however, is just a type, not the reality. The real David is Christ, the greater David (Matt. 12:1-8). He is the One who built God's temple, the church, and established God's kingdom (16:18-19). Therefore, in the church today, which is both a house and a kingdom, we have God's expression and representation. As the greater David, Christ has built up the house of God, the real temple, and He has set up the kingdom of God, the dominion in which He exercises full authority to represent God. Thus, He holds the key of David, that which represents God and opens the whole universe for God. It signifies that Christ is the center of God's economy. He is the One who expresses and represents God, holding the key to open everything in God's dominion.

Revelation 3:7 also says that Christ is the One who "opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens." He opens and shuts because the universal key, the key of God's economy, is in His hand. The Lord uses this key to deal with the church.

Isaiah 22:22-24 is a prophecy concerning Christ as the One who holds the key of David. The crucial subject in Isaiah 22 is the house of God. In this chapter it is prophesied that Christ would be not only the One holding the key of David but also a peg. If we consider the context of Isaiah 22 and read the context of the word regarding Christ as the One holding the key of David in Revelation 3, we will realize that Christ's holding the key of David is for God's house, God's building.

The epistle to the church in Philadelphia goes on to speak of the New Jerusalem (v. 12). The overcomers in Philadelphia will be pillars in the temple of God, and the temple of God will ultimately be enlarged into the New Jerusalem. According to Revelation 21:22, there is no temple in the New Jerusalem, for in eternity the temple will be enlarged into a city, which, having three equal dimensions (v. 16), will be the enlargement of the Holy of Holies. This is the ultimate consummation of God's house. Christ's holding the key of David, fighting the battle for God, building the temple, and establishing the kingdom of God are all for God's building.

Christ, holding the key of David, opens and shuts, not that we might be holy or spiritual but that we might be built up. Both holiness and spirituality are to enable us to be pillars in the temple of God. Eventually, we will bear the name of the New Jerusalem. In 3:12 the Lord said, "I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God,

the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.” God’s purpose is to make us part of the New Jerusalem. God desires a builded church. He wants today’s Bethel, the house of God, that will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

Isaiah 22:22-24 records Jehovah’s words regarding Eliakim, who typifies Christ: “I will set the key of the house of David upon his shoulder— / When he opens, no one will shut; / When he shuts, no one will open. / And I will drive him as a peg into a sure place, / And he will become a throne of glory for his father’s house. And they will hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all the smallest vessels, from the bowls to all the jars.” The all-inclusive Christ, as typified by Eliakim, is the One upon whose shoulder the key of (the treasury of—39:2) the house of God (typified by the house of David for the building up of the kingdom of God—2 Sam. 7:16) is set (Rev. 3:7). The church is both God’s house (1 Tim. 3:15) and God’s kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17). The key set on Christ’s shoulder is the key for the keeping of all the treasures of the house of God, which are all the riches of Christ for our enjoyment. Christ is the One who can open and shut the door to the treasury of God’s riches, which are embodied in Him (Col. 2:9). Christ has been driven by God as a peg, or nail, into a sure place (Isa. 22:23a), which typifies the third heaven (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2b), where Christ was exalted by God after His resurrection (Acts 2:33; 5:31). Because the Father is in the third heaven (Matt. 6:9), to be exalted to the third heaven is to be exalted to God the Father (cf. Luke 15:18). Christ today is in the heavens as a peg driven into God.

In Isaiah 22:24 *glory* is in apposition with both *the offspring and the issue* and *vessels*. Thus, the glory of the Father’s house that hangs on Christ as the peg is the children of God as the offspring and the issue (descendants) of God, and these children of God are the vessels of Christ, who hang on Him as the peg, the holder, in order to contain Him and to minister Him to others. The children of God as the offspring and the issue are glory in the house of God, and they are also the vessels. The Speaker to the church in Philadelphia holds the key of David to deal with us so that we might be transformed and built up. Once we have been built up, He will become a peg to us, and we will be the vessels hanging on Him.

First, Christ holds the key of David, and eventually He holds us. Christ used the key to open the door of our prison. Before we came into the church life, we were all imprisoned. But Christ, the One who holds the key of David, opened our prison and released us. According to our experience, all the doors opened for us by Christ are prison doors. Although the opposers are trying their best to imprison us, we are released by the key held in the hand of Christ. As today’s David, He has the key to open whatever God desires to open. Once He opens the door and we are released, we enter into the house of God where we become the household with many vessels held by Christ as the peg. Christ is the peg in God’s house, and by this peg, we all are held up from the earth.

First, Christ uses the key to release us from prison. After we have been released and have entered into the house of God, He becomes the peg holding us off the ground. The purpose of His doing this is so that we might be transformed into a pillar in God’s house. Eventually, we, the pillars, will become parts of the New Jerusalem. Christ’s writing the name of the New Jerusalem upon us means that we have been transformed into a part of the New Jerusalem. This is the church life, and this is the temple of God. Within this temple our Christ is a great peg holding us off the ground for God’s building.

As the One who has the key of David and who opens what no one will shut, the Lord has given the recovered church an opened door, which no one can shut. Through the years, the Lord’s recovery has experienced the Lord as such a One. Since the recovery of the proper church life began in the early part of the nineteenth century, a door has always been opened

wide to the Lord's recovery. From the beginning of the recovery of the proper church life, Satan, the enemy of God, tried his best to shut the door. The more organized Christianity tries to shut the door, the wider it is opened. In spite of much opposition, today the door is open worldwide. The key is in the hand of the Head of the church; it is not in the hand of the opposers. No matter how much opposition there is to His recovery, the doors are increasingly open to the recovery, and the key is in His hand. As long as we are in His recovery, the door will always be open to us. Although many opposers rose up against His recovery and tried their best to shut the door, Christ nevertheless is the One who has the key of David. What He opens no one will shut, and what He shuts no one will open. Today we should praise the Lord for the door open worldwide.

*Philadelphia* means "brotherly love." In the local churches we need the Philadelphia; we need the love for one another. We love one another because we love the Lord. We need the brotherly love, for in this love we have the open door. In a prevailing local church the door is always wide open, because the brothers love one another. As long as the brothers and sisters love one another, the door can never be shut. The more we love one another, the more the door will be open. If we invite others to come to the church meetings, we simply need to let them see the love with oneness and harmony that we have. This alone will convince them. The way to open the door is to love one another. The open door is set before Philadelphia. If we would have an open door, we must love one another. This will convince the world. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 4199-4204)