

Revelation 3:7-13 – The Jewish Blight in Philadelphia

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Maybe you have heard of the Jewish plight— how the Jews have been mistreated over the last 4000 years – from Egypt, to Assyria, to Babylon, to the Medo-Persians, to Rome, to the Muslims, the Roman Catholics, and to Nazi Germany. That is the sad reality **But today we will not examine the Jewish plight but instead examine the Jewish blight, how the Jews were on the other side, persecuting Christians and stunting the growth** of the church at Philadelphia. But more, you will also see how God instructed his church to deal with the blight so he could comfort the Philadelphians in their suffering.

Our headings are:

The **Commendations**

The **Condemnation**

The **Challenges**

The **Comforts**.

Our goals are: That you will **remember you are a permanent member of the true Israel**, that **you have God's name**, and **that you therefore must not fall for false doctrines from smooth-talking satanic shysters** that lead you away from God.

Commendations

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":

1. Philadelphia, which means "brotherly love," was another city in Asia Minor.

It was known for great earthquakes and had The Great Earthquake in AD17.

Some of those **large earthquakes left huge gaps in the ground.**

2. Philadelphia was very similar to the church in Smyrna in that they were persecuted by Jews.

3. Before Jesus commended the Philadelphians for their good deeds, he described himself as the key of David. Why?

The **chief steward of the royal household usually held the keys of power**. So Jesus is letting the Jews know that if they really believed in David they would listen to him... At least the real Jews would listen to him!

Jesus was not only drawing from David but from Isaiah also. There God accused a holy man of being a false steward of his people. God then promised to remove that man from his position and replace him. Christ is the one who is replacing the false stewards of Israel. See these **false shepherds** in Ezekiel 34 and contrast it with John 10-the **Good Shepherd**.

Isaiah 22:19 So I will drive you out of your office, and from your position he will pull you down. **20** 'Then it shall be in that day, that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah; **21** I will clothe him with your robe And strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. **22** The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open.

Eliakim (God raises up) and **Hilkiyah** (My portion is Jehovah) are names which point us to the work of Christ and his Father! What a wonderful illustration of the one with full authority!

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.

4. What were the good works of the Philadelphians for which they were commended?

The Philadelphians stood up to the persecution of the apostate Jews and did not give in. Yes, the Philadelphians were weak (small in number -that's what "little strength" means) but **they kept obeying God and did not deny his Words.**

The Philadelphians were **not "prominent, stylish, or outwardly prosperous" yet they were faithful.**

Remember, apostate Jews were trying to get new Christians to forget about Christ and keep all the already fulfilled Old Testament ceremonies. But these new Christians remained faithful.

The Jews were left out of the church; the Gentiles enter in through Jesus, the Door.

5. Lessons:

a. There is no other way to David's God other than through the Door, Jesus Christ. You are inside! Rejoice!

b. Don't let your small numbers –your lack of famous people – your limited church programs - stop you from living faithfully and working for the Lord's church. Fame and size are insignificant to the Lord. Faithfulness is significant to him. Stand firm, don't shake.

c. And to the whole church: Don't let the pressure of the world and false religions force you to compromise. Stand up boldly for the Lord's truth. **Keep in mind that standing up for truth is a testimony to the world and may lead men to Jesus.**

Condemnation

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**.

1. Jesus condemned (normally our 2nd point was “concerns”) the apostate Jews, calling them “the synagogue of Satan.”

The Lord was more than “concerned” sins of the Jews. The “synagogue of Satan” had infiltrated the Philadelphian church. The Philadelphians weren’t the problem.

Jews who don’t believe the New Testament, even if say they believe the whole Old Testament, are not Orthodox, but unorthodox Jews. **No one can truly say he believes the Old Testament and yet reject Jesus Christ**. The god of Jews today is Satan.

Remember when the Jews said they were following Abraham? Jesus, in his blunt assessment, called them liars. John 7-8. Jesus said their god was Satan...because they did not look to him as Abraham did. Anyone who rejects Jesus is serving Satan!

2. Jesus said these wicked Jews would ultimately have to “come and worship” at the feet of Gentile Christians.

This is hyperbole. **No man is to worship another one**. This simply meant the Jews would have to acknowledge they were wrong and the Gentiles were right – and Jesus loved the Gentiles. The past leaders, the Jews, would become followers.

Jesus took his words that he told Isaiah to use to condemn the pretending Jews.

Isaiah 60:14 Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

More would be the children of the “bond woman” – Gentiles - than of the Jews. Isaiah 54. Many Jews were left out of True Israel.

Romans 11:17 ...some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

3. Lessons:

a. All the wicked – atheists, agnostics, and followers of false religions, will have to admit publicly Jesus is Lord and Christians were right! Don’t get upset if people don’t acknowledge this now. Be patient.

b. All the wicked – atheists, agnostics, and followers of false religions will be condemned by Jesus for their unbelief and for their persecuting of God’s people. Tell them about the Savior and the cross! Help save them from condemnation!

Challenges

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

1. Christ knew he was “soon” going to come and destroy unbelieving and trouble-causing Jews and he said so.

Certainly this was could not mean 2000 years later.

What brutal destruction Jesus brought on Jerusalem in AD 70 – the fierce persecutors of his people.

2. But to enjoy the full blessings of Christ, pictured by a crown, his church had to hold their ground...hold firmly to their beliefs.

2Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

3. Lessons:

a. Don’t be jealous of the apparent success of the wicked, rather, hold faithfully to the Word of God and practice it!

b. If you do, you are guaranteed success and rewards – wonderful, heavenly rewards that no man could take away – and civil leaders couldn’t tax! You don’t have to give a “fair share” of your hard work to anyone else!

Comforts

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.

1. Christ promised to keep (preserve) his people as they experienced persecution from apostate Jews and savage Romans.

He did not promise to rapture them and take them to heaven, but give them grace to persevere in their present suffering.

Jude 1: 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

2. Verse 10 is often misused by others in modern times to say this is describing Christ’s 2nd coming at the end of the world.

But this promise is not one of the 2nd coming of Christ. Would Christ promise to keep people till his coming...more than 2000 years later? **Would he say: “I’m coming quickly” and mean more than 2000 years?** Would **“the hour” be a long trial or a short period of time?** Earlier, he said persecution would last “ten days,” a short time.

Further, Jesus was directing his teaching here to those who lived in that country (not the whole earth).

“The word translated “earth” means: 1) arable land. 2) the ground. 3) the main land as opposed to the sea or water 4) the earth as a whole. 5. Israel – the country. **Only context will give you the sense of the meaning of the word.** What is the context here?

Jesus is addressing the Jews, the Synagogue of Satan! The test will come, not to the geographic world but to test those who are in this country. Most commentators agree! **John used the word "land" or "earth" 12X, certainly to refer to the 12 tribes of Israel.** The word "land" is used in the Old Testament to represent Israel, especially in judgment! A couple of examples.

Jeremiah 1:14 - Then the LORD said to me: "Out of the north calamity shall break forth On all the inhabitants of the land.

Ezekiel 7:7 - Doom has come to you, you who dwell in the land; The time has come, A day of trouble is near, And not of rejoicing in the mountains.

See also Jer 10:18, Ezek 36:17, Hosea 4:1, Joel 1:2, 14, Zeph 1:18, Josh 7:9, 9:24, Jud 1:32, 2Samuel 5:6, 1Chron 11:4, 22:18, Neh 9:24, Num 32:17, 33:52,55, Hosea 4:3

12 "He who overcomes, **I will make him a pillar** in the temple of My God, and **he shall go out no more.** And 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. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.""

3. Christ then borrowed from the imagery of the 2 temple pillars on which were written the name of God.

The overcoming Philadelphians who held their ground would be permanently made part of God's house. Their names would be carved in stone! They would have God's name written on them. So they had no need to ever go out and get lost anymore. **The mark or image of God will be permanently restored to the overcomers.**

This was a good image of stability in a city known for its earthquakes and damaged houses. And remember, **this is not a temple that will be in heaven...as there will be no temple there.**

4. Lessons:

a. Someone wrote: "Those who keep the gospel in a time of peace shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation." Amen! This is true.

b. The church of Jesus will remain because God's name is written on her. She may wander sometimes. She may be even be overwhelmed by persecution sometimes. Her preaching may fail sometimes. Discipline may be lax sometimes. But the Lord's church can never be destroyed. He said so!

c. Let this give you confidence. Do your work. Live for God. Raise your families. Speak up for the widows, orphans, and foreigners. Worship with boldness. Boldly tell others about Jesus.

Conclusion:

The apostate Jews pretended to shut Christians out of the kingdom of God, but Christ comforts them with the fact that **he was the key to the door to the kingdom.** The apostate Jewish pretenders weren't the keys. And just as the wicked Ishmael was excommunicated for persecuting the young, **but chosen Isaac,** so those who attacked the Philadelphian Christians would be excommunicated – permanently – by Christ.

Beloved in the Lord:

1. God keeps him promises, promises to bless his people, and promises to destroy her enemies. Rejoice. **You are part of the family of God and none can take you way.** God is your home. Worship him!

2. While you don't have the same level of persecution, you do and will face persecution. People who pretend to be Christians will say: **How dare you worship in Covid times?** Stay home, save lives! They don't realize worship is essential – and God says so! Those who say you have to **think God accepts all religions** and have **different ways of saving** and you should accept them **are wrong.** Reject them and that! Hold fast! **God will destroy your enemies and make them admit you were right to trust in the one true God, Yahweh.**

Finally, while Christians will be preserved and kept in God's house, those who are pretenders will be rejected and cast out. According to Matthew 8:11-12, they would be cast into hell – outer darkness - and there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Wouldn't you like to be saved from him? Jesus can save you, if you ask him.