

Revelation 3:9-13—The Church of Philadelphia—The Missionary Church—Part 2

We are now in the second section of the Book of Revelation, which deals with “the things which are” (Revelation 1:19).

Last week we revised the first 5 churches and started going through the church of Philadelphia. This week we will finish looking at the church of Philadelphia, the faithful missionary church of which Jesus had nothing bad to say. I won't revise what we covered last week, so if you missed it, you will need to listen to last week's message. It was important regarding missions and evangelism.

Revelation 3:7-13 NKJV

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

13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

The Church of Philadelphia Continued

Revelation 3:9 NKJV

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.

v **9 I will make those of the synagogue of Satan:** In this end-times church there is a synagogue of Satan—those who say they are Jews but aren't. Who are these people? In John's day, the reference would have been to the Jews who persecuted believers. Jesus said previously and reiterates here, “They're not true Jews, any more than Christians who persecute Jews are true Christians.”

v **9 I will make them come and worship before your feet:** In the old testament, God promised Israel that the Gentiles would honour them and acknowledge their God (Isaiah 45:14). Now the tables were somewhat turned, and these Jewish people will play the role of the gentiles and acknowledge that God is working through the church.

v **9 worship before your feet:** Does this mean that the Jews will be worshipping the Christians? No. 1 Corinthians 14:24–25 speaks of unbelievers falling down in the midst of Christians to worship God. This establishes that it wasn't Christians who were being worshipped, but God was worshipped in the *presence* of Christians.

v 9 **And to know that I have loved you:** As those who were once their enemies worshipped along side them, they were destroyed as enemies. They now knew that Jesus had **loved** these people they once persecuted. *The best way to destroy the enemies of the Gospel is to pray that God would change them into friends.* Think of the apostle Paul. God changed him from Christianity's most powerful persecutor to its most passionate defender. Never forget to pray for your enemies.

Revelation 3:10 NKJV

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.

v 10 **Because you have kept My command to persevere:** This is literally, "Because you have kept the word of My patience"

What does it mean to keep "the word of Jesus' patience?" I would suggest that 2 Thessalonians 3:5 gives us a clue.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 NKJV

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 NLT

May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ.

What is the patient endurance that comes from Christ? What causes us to endure?

Titus 2:11-13 NKJV

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,**

When will Jesus appear for the church? At the rapture! What does thinking about and believing in the rapture bring about in us? Blessed hope. Jesus is our hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NKJV

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, **that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.**

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷ **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ **Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

What comforts us? The promise of resurrection for those Christians who have already died and the hope of the rapture for those Christians who are still alive.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 NLT

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. **For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.** ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. ⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ **So (therefore), my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless (for nothing).**

What causes us to be strong and immovable, to always work enthusiastically for the Lord... you got it, the promise of resurrection for those Christians who have already died and the hope of the rapture for those Christians who are still alive.

Have you ever thought about why the bible uses the word “sleep” to refer to a Christian’s death? Because for the Christian there is nothing to fear in death. Think about it, you go to bed tired and wake up refreshed. That’s what it is like for a Christian to pass into the next life, but just much better.

Again, what causes us to persevere, to keep the word of Jesus’ patience? It’s the hope of the resurrection and the rapture. We should be living in constant anticipation that Jesus could come back and snatch the church away to heaven at any time, and if we die before that time, then we will be resurrected when Jesus does come back for the church. Again, when will Jesus come back for us and when will we get our glorified bodies? At the rapture. But today, more than 80% of the church no longer believes this.

Did you know that in the first two centuries, the topics of Jesus’ Second Coming and the Rapture of the church were central themes of preaching and writing? But then Bible prophecy was lost as an interest in the church until the 1800’s because people in the second century said, “It’s impossible for a nation to come back from the dead. “It’s unthinkable that the Jewish people could have a national identity again. It’s gotta be an allegory. Why would the Middle East be the focal point of a battle? Who cares about the Middle East?” This false teaching carried on throughout the centuries until the 1800’s. Even the reformers like Luther in the 1500’s, who came back to a literal understanding of the scriptures concerning salvation, still held to an allegorical understanding of the scriptures concerning prophecy, and so continued to believe that God had finished with the nation of Israel.

But this church, the church of Philadelphia, has not lost sight of Jesus imminent return, and, as a result, know that they will be spared the tribulation. It was this church prophetically around the 1800’s, who came back to a literal understanding of prophecy, who once again understood that God wasn’t finished with the nation of Israel and that the church will be snatched away before those terrible 7 years of tribulation.

Now, does this mean that believers in those churches that don't believe in the rapture won't be snatched away by Jesus? No. Let's take a look at the Church of Thyatira, prophetically the Catholic church, and see how Jesus relates His second coming to them.

Revelation 2:20, 24-26 NKJV - (Church of Thyatira)

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her **into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.**

"Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come. ²⁶ **And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—**

Notice that it's only those who hadn't repented who would go into the tribulation, meaning those didn't believe. The rest, those who have not known the depths of Satan, are told to "hold fast till I come," and are given a promise of ruling and reigning with Jesus in His millennial reign.

Now we will look at the church of Sardis, the reformation church, and see how Jesus relates His second coming to them.

Revelation 3:3 NKJV (Church of Sardis)

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Jesus is saying about this church that has not held fast the the truth of the scriptures, especially concerning prophecy, that they will still go up at the time of the rapture, but it will take them by surprise. Why? Because they don't teach it or believe it. They think the rapture is a foolish idea. They take an allegorical approach to prophecy. So, because they weren't expecting the rapture, Jesus will take them by surprise when he snatches all the true believers, who are the church, away.

Unfortunately, today, most the church is going back to an allegorical interpretation of prophecy, like it was from the second century to the 18th century.

So, what happens when people allegorise parts of the scriptures? They simply say that it is only symbolic, not rooted in real history or events, and that there is a spiritual meaning that we can learn. However, men can choose whatever meaning they wish. That's why allegorising is so dangerous. The only meaning that an allegorist absolutely rejects is the literal, true meaning. Anything else is okay.

What happened was that the whole prophetic outline which revolves around God's covenant promises to Israel was reinterpreted allegorically to mean whatever men wanted it to mean, and what did they want it to mean? That God rejected the nation of Israel when they rejected their Messiah and so replaced Israel with the church. Even today many churches believe that the unconditional covenant promises that God gave to Israel now apply to the church and Israel is forgotten and forever rejected. This is called replacement theology, the false teaching that the church has replaced Israel, that God broke His unconditional covenant promises with Israel and has now rejected them from being His special people. I challenge you to read the prophecies concerning Israel throughout the bible. Not only are they clearly addressed to Israel, but also they can only literally be fulfilled by Israel. For example, returning to the holy land and the rebuilding of the temple etc.

I think that God knew what would happen during the church age and He make His viewpoint very clear. Consider:

Jeremiah 31:33-37 NKJV

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel **after those days**, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

³⁵ Thus says the Lord,

Who gives the sun for a light by day,

The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night,

Who disturbs the sea,

And its waves roar

(The Lord of hosts is His name):

³⁶ **"If those ordinances depart
From before Me, says the Lord,
Then the seed of Israel shall also cease
From being a nation before Me forever."**

³⁷ Thus says the Lord:

"If heaven above can be measured,

And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath,

I will also cast off all the seed of Israel

For all that they have done, says the Lord.

I challenge you to think of a more clear and empathetic way for God to communicate that nothing the nation of Israel does will cause Him to reject them, and that they will always be a nation before Him.

I was talking to someone recently who has bought into the replacement theology lie. My main response to them was that God has promises to keep.

Listen, if you know anything about the character of God, you will know that God never breaks His promises. Replacement theology is blasphemy. It calls God a liar. It says that His promises are not unconditional and are actually based on performance or obedience or works. My question to you is this; "if it is true that God broke His unconditional promises He made to Israel because of their disobedience, then what hope to do we the church have? Can we say that we have been more obedient than Israel?" Do you think that church history is any better than that of the nation of Israel? Also, what about us individually? If a believer falls into sin, does that mean that God will reject them because of their disobedience? Do you see where this leads?

Romans 9-11 clearly states that, while God is disciplining Israel because of their disobedience, He has not finished with them, rather He will show them mercy, and He will keep the covenant promises that He gave to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and the other prophets.

When we get to Revelation chapter 12, I will explain the origin this false teaching called replacement theology, and how this very incorrect method of interpretation (using allegory), is the basis of antisemitism, and that antisemitism, which has resulted in the butchering of millions of Jews, actually started in the church.

Finally, for those alive today, it should be obvious that God has not rejected His chosen people. In 1948 God kept His promise when He miraculously brought Israel back into their promised land and make them a nation again. In addition He is constantly supernaturally protecting them and providing for them. ***If God has forgotten about Israel, then why is God still fulfilling His promises to them as a nation? And why is the attention of the whole world now constantly focused on the Middle East, specifically Israel, if Israel is no longer a part of God's plan?***

Revelation 3:10 NKJV

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.

v 10 **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:** This is the promise that the church will not go through the tribulation. It shows that the Rapture comes before the tribulation. Why? There are several reasons:

v 10 **the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world:** This is the tribulation. Quote from David Guzik: "Most Bible scholars see this hour of trial as a prophetic reference to the Messianic woes, the Great Tribulation, which precede Jesus' earthly kingdom. Jesus promised to keep these Christians from that hour of trial."

Think about it, this describes a time of trial which *shall* come (future) upon the *whole earth*. The Roman empire did not control the whole earth. Even world war 1 and world war 2 did not affect the whole world. In contrast, this coming trial will effect every person on the globe. It will be inescapable. The tribulation is the only event that fits this description.

Which view of the Rapture best fits Revelation 3:10?

v 10 **I also will keep you from (ek) the hour of trial:** This is a good time to explore the different view on the rapture and show that the bible supports only one view.

The four positions or beliefs concerning the timing of the rapture relative to the 7 year tribulation period.

1. **Pre-tribulation rapture** — the rapture happens before the 7 year tribulation.
2. **Mid-tribulation rapture** — the rapture happens near the half way point of the 7 year tribulation.
3. **Post-tribulation rapture** — the rapture happens at the end of the 7 year tribulation.
4. **There is no rapture** or tribulation or 1,000 year rule and reign of Jesus (the typical allegorical interpretation of prophecy)

It's time to point out that there are different viewpoints concerning the rapture. Some, like myself, believe that the rapture will happen before the tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture), some halfway through (mid-tribulation rapture), and some at the end (post-tribulation rapture). Then there are others don't even believe that there will be a rapture at all. But let's consider those who do believe in the rapture, the great snatch, but disagree on the timing. Let's see which viewpoint fits best with Revelation 3:10

Revelation 3:10 NKJV

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from (Greek = ek) the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

So, does this verse imply an **escape before** the Great Tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture), or does it promise **protection in** it (mid or post tribulation rapture)? Each side believes this passage easily supports their position.

Those who believe the church will be here on earth during this time of Great Tribulation focus on Jesus' command to persevere, and say the context demands seeing this as protection that enables the faithful to persevere in the period.

Those who believe that Jesus will come for His church before this time of Great Tribulation note that **protection is promised from the very hour of trial, not just the trial itself**. They also point out that the great tribulation will be a worldwide, inescapable cataclysm, as predicted in Matthew 24:21 and Revelation chapters 6, 8–9, 16.

However, I think that the scriptures make it very clear which viewpoint is correct. Firstly, **"kept my command to persevere"** is in the past tense, showing it is something that the Christians had already done *before* the hour of trial, which has *not yet come* upon the world — it is future. The promise is a *reward* for past perseverance, not the *equipping* to persevere in the future. Therefore, "As far as the Philadelphian church was concerned, the rapture of the church was presented to them as an imminent hope."

Also, the word "from" is the Greek Ek, which means out of. John could have used the Greek preposition "apo" which means away from (i.e. sheltered or protected), but he didn't. To be "ek" or "out of", means that you are not there, you are not present *during the hour* of the tribulation.

Another evidence that the church does not go through the tribulation is found in the next part of the verse.

v 10 **Those who dwell upon the earth:** Who is this referring to? Who is being tested? This phrase is used at least 7 times in the Book of Revelation, and it speaks of those who are not saved in Jesus. Revelation 17:8 makes this clear:

Revelation 17:8 NKJV

And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world.

Therefore, this test is for unbelievers, not the church. God takes the church out of the world before He judges the world.

So this verse shows that God is going to keep us, the church, *out of* that **hour** of testing that is aimed at *those who dwell on the earth*. He is going to keep us "ek," out of it.

Another reason that "those who dwell on the earth" does not include the church is that fact that, though we *walk* on this earth, our *dwelling place* is in heaven. We have been seated in heavenly places in Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). We do not dwell on the earth, our life is hidden in Jesus (Colossians 3:3), and we are citizens of Heaven (Philippians 3:21).

Ephesians 2:5-6 NKJV

...even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, **and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

Colossians 3:3 NKJV

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, **where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.** ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,

When we come to Chapter 4, we will see many more evidences that the church won't go through the 7 year tribulation period.

The privilege of living in the end times

Just as a side note, this is a glorious time to be alive. The prophets predicted that all these things would happen.

Luke 10:23-24 NKJV

²³ Then when they were alone, he turned to the disciples and said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen. ²⁴ I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it."

This verses applies to the first coming of Jesus, when many prophecies were fulfilled. But we can also apply it to the second coming of Christ, when many more prophecies are being and will continue to be fulfilled before our very eyes, and again we get to see our blessed Saviour.

How do you avoid going into the 7 year tribulation period?

All a person needs to do to avoid going into the 7 year tribulation period is repent and receive the forgiveness of sins. The saddest time of all will be the great white throne judgement, where all the unbelievers are judged and sent to the Lake of Fire. I picture that next to them will be pardons for all those people that were never received. You see, Jesus can forgive every sin except the sin of not receiving His free gift of eternal life. John 16:8-11 makes this very clear:

John 16:8-9 NLT

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, ... ⁹ **The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me.**

The gift of eternal life must be received, a choice must be made to believe that Jesus' death on the cross was the payment in full for all the sins of all people and to repent; meaning to have a change of heart and mind and turn from the old life and instead follow Jesus (turn away from sin and turn to God). We must acknowledge that we are sinners deserving of death and that the only way to freedom is by receiving Jesus' free pardon, that is He declares us to be not guilty because the penalty for our sins was

paid in full by Jesus sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross. Just going to church or being raised as a Christian is not enough. Those who refuse to believe and accept do so only because they love darkness rather than the light. They refuse to repent because they don't want to stop sinning. Consider:

John 3:18-21 NLT

"There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

Back to the church of Philadelphia

Revelation 3:11 NKJV

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

v 11 **Behold, I am coming quickly!**: *Tachu*, the Greek word translated "quickly," actually means "suddenly," as opposed to "soon." Thus, the idea here is that the Lord could come at any moment. Only we who believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture can say, "It could be today." Mid- and post-Tribulationists, on the other hand, have no recourse but to say, "The Lord can't come back today because the Tribulation hasn't begun yet." But we say, "It could be today." And such is the throbbing heartbeat of Bible prophecy.

As a result we should be preparing for His coming. We don't want to be doing something that we would be ashamed of when Jesus comes back and snatches us away. As it says in:

1 John 3:2-3 NKJV

Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. ³ **And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.**

v 11 **Hold fast what you have**: The church at Philadelphia must not depart from its solid foundation, as described in Revelation 3:8:

- **Evangelistic opportunity** (*I have set before you an open door*)
- **Reliance on God** (*You have a little strength*)
- **Faithfulness to Jesus** (*have kept My word, and have not denied My name*)

Personal Application

We must remember that these things will only happen as we **hold fast what we have**. It's so important to realise, remember and understand that God has already given us everything that we need. We just need to walk by faith, relying on God's provision that He has already provided. It's like going for a long hike over many days, but a friend has prepared the necessary equipment, food and water at various stops along the route. We can either use the food and water that he provided or seek our own. We access what is already provided by faith.

The church of Philadelphia is God's will for His church. This is what we should be aiming for. Remember that this is one of only two churches that Jesus had nothing bad to say about. We too must hold fast to what God has given us. Don't give up. Don't get weary. Don't lose hope.

Romans 15:13 NKJV

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:4-5 NLT

For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, ⁵ which **come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven.** You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

Colossians 1:23a NKJV

...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, **and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel** which you heard, ...

So why does Jesus command them to "hold fast?" Because we can so easily be moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

v 11 **Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown:** This is intriguing. "I'm coming suddenly," Jesus says, "so hold fast in order that you don't lose your crown." "Crown?" you say. "I don't have one yet. How can I lose what I don't yet have? What does this mean?"

Actually there are many crowns, and all are our rewards. What Jesus is warning us about is that we can lose our reward if we don't hold fast. We can never lose our salvation, but we can lose our reward (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Consider the following for example:

Daniel 12:3 NKJV

Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.

There will be great reward for those who make the effort to reach out to people and lead them to Christ.

Who may take my crown?

Now we ask the question, who may take my crown? Remember it says, "**That no one may take your crown.**"

Actually, in the original language, the idea is that if they failed to **hold fast**, their **crown** (that is, their reward) might be *given* to another. The idea is not that it might be *stolen* by another, but rather *given to* another.

"Never forget that the man most likely to steal your crown is *yourself*. 'Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life' (Proverbs 4:23). You are in no greater danger from anyone or anything than from yourself." (Havner)

The idea is that if we don't complete the works that God has prepared in advance for us (Ephesians 2:10), which will result in a reward for us, *then God will get someone else to do them, and that other person will get the reward.* So instead of us receiving the reward, the reward will be given to another.

Revelation 3:12 NKJV

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.

v 12 **He who overcomes:** What does it mean to be an overcomer? How do we overcome?

1 John 5:3-5 NKJV

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that **has overcome** the world—**our faith.** ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This passage shows us that we don't overcome by working harder or putting more effort into things, but rather simply by trusting God and depending on Him.

Notice it says that the victory is past tense—**has overcome**—so if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it means that you have already overcome the world. How? Jesus did it for you. Jesus has overcome the world, and because I am "in Christ," then I also have overcome the world. His victory has become mine. All we need to do is walk in the victory we have already received, to work it out practically. How? Read your bible and obey it, pray, fellowship and evangelise. Overall, simply make your relationship with God the most important part of your life.

v 12 **I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more:** This had a historical application. "The ancient city of Philadelphia suffered from frequent earthquakes. When a building collapsed in an earthquake, often all that remained standing were the huge pillars. Jesus offers us this same strength, to remain standing in Him when everything around us crumbles" (David Guzik). Remember that Jesus is our Rock, immovable.

Also, "the pillar holds up the building and the only thing supporting the pillar is the foundation. True pillars in the church support the church, and they look to Jesus as their support foundation" (David Guzik).

v 12 **and he shall go out no more:** "The citizens of Philadelphia lived an unsettled and tremulous life. Whenever the earthquake tremors came, and they came often, the people of Philadelphia fled from the city out into the open country, to escape the falling masonry and the flying stones which accompanied a severe earthquake shock. Then, when the earth was quiet again, they returned. In their fear the people of Philadelphia were always going out and coming in; they were always fleeing from the city and then returning to it." (Barclay)

So the application for us is that the overcomer would have a place of permanence and stability with God, in contrast to an uncertain place in this world. Remember that 1Jn 4:18 says that "perfect love casts out fear." The Christian is the only person on this evil planet who has good reason to be completely fearless.

v 12 **I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem,... And I will write on him My new name:** This works together well with the image of a **pillar**. In the ancient world, a special inscribed pillar added to one of the temples sometimes honoured a faithful city servant or distinguished priest. History tells us that “Philadelphia honoured its illustrious sons by putting their names on the pillars of its temples, so that all who came to worship might see and remember.”

Personal Application

These are some of the rewards of being faithful, of walking by faith, of overcoming the world. We receive many names—of God, the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Jesus. These names are marks of identification because they show who we belong to, and they are also marks of intimacy, because they show we are privileged to know Him in ways others are not.

v 12 **...the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.**

This is a reference to Revelation 21:2 which describes the new heavens and the new earth. This is a reference to eternity to come. This is what Abraham was looking forward to, and should be what we are looking forward to as well, because it is where Jesus is:

Hebrews 11:9-10 NLT

And even when he [Abraham] reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

Hebrews 11:13-16 NLT

All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵ **If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back.** ¹⁶ **But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.**

Personal Application

Are you looking forward to the New Jerusalem, the city made by God, where we will live forever and ever with Jesus, our eternal home? Are you living like a stranger or nomad down here, or making yourself at home?

Revelation 3:13 NKJV

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

What are three of the main characteristics of the church of Philadelphia?

Brotherly love, evangelism, and holding fast are all characteristics of this church at Philadelphia—which is perhaps best typified by Francis of Assisi when he said, “Witness wherever you go, and if absolutely necessary, use words.” Truly, evangelism is directly connected to love.

What the Spirit says to the churches—Evidence for the Rapture

Revelation 3:13

“He who has an ear, let him hear ***what the Spirit says to the churches.***” ’

Revelation 13:9

“If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”

Towards the end of each of the seven letters to the seven churches, there is the repeated phrase, “He who has an ear, let him hear ***what the Spirit says to the churches.***”

Now read:

Revelation 13:9

“If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”

What is missing? “***what the Spirit says to the churches.***” Why, because the church isn’t there. Praise God, the church will be caught up to heaven before the start of the 7 year tribulation period. The church is in heaven. We will be gone.

This should be the focused hope of everyone who has come to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:13 NKJV

looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

I’ll close with a quote from Spurgeon:

“**Looking for the blessed hope:** Grace teaches us to expect and prepare for our **blessed hope**. That **hope** is not heaven or glory, but Jesus Himself, face to face, closer than ever.”

We look forward to heaven, because heaven is where Jesus is.