

The Seven Church Attitudes Revealed By Christ in the Book of Revelation

Part 6

Revelation 3:7 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no-one can shut, and what he shuts no-one can open.”*

Jesus introduces Himself as the One who is totally in control of all that is accomplished for Him in the Church.

Any outreach will only be successful if it is initiated and empowered by Him.

John 15:4-5 [NIV] *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. **No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”***

Without Jesus Christ working in us and through us nothing of lasting value will be accomplished.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”***

The work of the Holy Spirit in us and through us to other people, is the working of Jesus Christ in us.

Let us now read the message given to this church then meditate on what was said and consider the action that needs to be taken by such a Christian or Christian church.

Revelation 3:8-13 [NIV] *“I know your deeds. See, **I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars, I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no-one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

Philadelphia was founded by colonists from Pergamum, and was built for a special purpose and intention.

The city was situated where the borders of Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia met, with the deliberate intention of being a missionary community of Greek culture and language in the area.

For the Christians it was an “open door” for their message of the love of Jesus Christ.

Philadelphia was on the edge of a great volcanic plain that gave it very fertile land and a great centre for grape growing.

In AD17 a great earthquake which destroyed Sardis and ten other cities caused a continuation of after tremors for many years in Philadelphia.

Those who still dared to live in the city spent much of their time shoring up shaking buildings, and sometimes having to flee the city.

The people of Philadelphia were very grateful for the promise of Jesus Christ that *“they would go out no more”*.

The city of Philadelphia experienced several *“new names”* as different rulers named it after themselves.

Philadelphia was the last bastion of Asian Christianity, not falling to Islam until middle of the fourteenth century.

What is the meaning of the *“open door”* that Jesus Christ set before them?

A door of missionary opportunity.

Jesus Christ had to open the door for the church because they had such *“little strength”* that they could not open it themselves.

The Christian fellowship in Philadelphia was small in numbers compared to the great opportunity that was set before them, because of their location.

Many doors were opened by Jesus Christ for the early church.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9 [NIV] *“But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, **because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.**”*

2 Corinthians 2:12 [NIV] *“Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that **the Lord had opened a door for me,**”*

Colossians 4:3-4 [NIV] *“And pray for us, too, **that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.**”*

Acts 14:27 [NIV] *“On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had **opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.**”*

Prayer can open doors for witness at any time.

Revelation 3:9 [NIV] *“I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars, I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.”*

What is the meaning of this prophecy that the risen Jesus Christ names?

One of the great expectations of the Jews is that in a new age, when God vindicates His people, all nations would come and do homage to the Jews.

Isaiah 60:14 [NIV] *“**The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.**”*

Isaiah 45:14 [NIV] *“This is what the LORD says: “The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans, they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. **They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, ‘Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.’**”*

Isaiah 49:23 [NIV] *“Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. **They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.**”*

Zechariah 8:22-23 [NIV] *“And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him.” This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men from all languages and **nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”***

Now it is Christian belief that the Jewish nation has lost its place in the plan of God and these promises have been passed to the Christian church.

Romans 9:6-9 [NIV] *“It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, **“It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.** For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”*

A Jew in God’s eyes is **not** one who can claim racial descent from Abraham but any person who has the same faith as Abraham.

Galatians 6:15-16 [NIV] *“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to **the Israel of God.**”*

The Christian church is now the Israel of God.

It is therefore true that all the promises made to Israel have been inherited by the church, including the one quoted above.

This is the very reversal of what Jews expect to happen to them.

This is the promise the Philadelphian church would see, at least in its beginning stage, if they remained faithful to Jesus Christ.

Revelation 3:10 [NIV] *“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”*

If we keep Jesus Christ’s commandments He will keep us safe.

We have to practice the same endurance that Jesus Christ did in His earthly life.

Jesus Christ supplies us with three things to help us endure.

a) His own personal example

b) **Hebrews 12:1-2** [NIV] *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”*

The goal that Jesus Christ set His eyes on is our goal also, the joy of future eternal life. Eternal life is new for us but for Jesus Christ the human Son of Man it was returning to what He had before His incarnation.

John 17:5 [NIV] *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

c) The endurance of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of His sympathy with us when we are called upon to endure.

Hebrews 2:18 [NIV] *“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”*

Our trust can be on One who has gone through everything we may be called on to endure.

Romans 8:35-38 [NIV] *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,”*

The total extent of any trial we may have to endure.

Revelation 3:11 [NIV] *“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no-one will take your crown.”*

This is a warning to those who are **not** using to the full the talents and opportunities we have to fulfil our commission to make and teach disciples for Jesus Christ.

Matthew 24:45-51 [NIV] *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? **It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.** I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he then begins to beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. **The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.** He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Always remember the return of Jesus Christ could be tomorrow for any one of us by facing sudden death.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 [NIV] *“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”*

A sudden return is indicated.

1 Peter 4:3-5 [NIV] *“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”*

A warning to all who think they can follow their own pursuits, a day of judgement will come to us all.

This can be a comfort to the oppressed.

James 5:7-9 [NIV] *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. **You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.** Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!”*

James urges patient endurance in our working to enlarge the Kingdom of God by harvesting people for Jesus Christ.

John 4:34-38 [NIV] *“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.”*

Sometimes Christians try to excuse themselves by saying that their family and friends are **not** ready to become believers.

Look around and we will find people who are ready to hear God’s Word.

“Hold on to ... your crown.” It is **not** a question of someone stealing our reward [future crown].

It is a question of God taking our crown from us and giving it to someone else because we are not fulfilling the task and work of harvesting that God expects us to be doing.

Genesis 25:34, 27:36 [NIV] *“Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. **So Esau despised his birthright.**” ... “Esau said, “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: **He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!**” Then he asked, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?”*

Esau lost his place to Jacob.

Genesis 49:3, 8 [NIV] *“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honour, excelling in power.” ... “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons [including Reuben] will bow down to you.”*

Reuben lost his place to Judah.

1 Samuel 16:1, 13 [NIV] *“The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” ... “So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and **from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.** Samuel then went to Ramah.”*

Saul lost his place to David.

Acts 1:25-26 [NIV] *“to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” Then they cast lots, and the **lot fell to Matthias**; so he was added to the eleven apostles.”*

Judas lost his place to Matthias.

Romans 11:11 [NIV] *“Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their [the Jews] transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.”*

Jews lost their place to the Gentiles.

This can happen to any Christian.

The task God gives to us may seem to be far beyond our natural abilities.

But God does this for a purpose, to make us cry out for Him to send the Holy Spirit to empower us and complete the task by working in and through us.

Hebrews 9:14 [NIV] *“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*

Jesus the physical Son of Man accomplished the task God the Father gave Him by the Holy Spirit working in and through Him.

We can and should follow this example of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar.”

Galatians 2:9 [NIV] *“James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognised the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.”*

James, Peter and John were likened to pillars in the church for the support they gave to others.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 [NIV] *“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.**”*

The Church as a whole is to be a pillar upholding the truth.

This is a two-fold duty of every Christian, to support fellow Christians and to constantly uphold the truth as found in God’s written word, the Christian Bible, and Jesus Christ’s personal example.