



Empowering People to Change the World

## **The Church at Philadelphia: Law of the Open Door Part I**

Steve Holt

## **The Church at Philadelphia-Church of the Open Door (part I)**

- These are very exciting chapters, chapter 2 and 3, because they are so applicational to our live today.
- We see the heart of God and what Jesus really cares about in the churches and in our lives.
- The heart of Jesus comes out with each commendation and criticism.

Only two cities have nothing but good said of them:

- One is Smyrna and the other is Philadelphia.
- There is so much for us to learn from the Church in Philadelphia.

### **Revelations 3:7**

**And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,**

- Founded in 190 BC by Eumenus II, king of Pergamon. His unusual devotion to his brother earned it the name, “the city of brotherly love” or better, “one who loves his brother.”
- The youngest of the 7 cities in, what is modern day, Turkey.
- Famous for wine production, Dionysus or Dionysos, was the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness and ecstasy in Greek mythology.
- Called the “little Athens” because it was filled with so many gods and temples.
- The city still survives today:
  - The name is now Alaşehir.
  - About 20,000 in the town, in Turkey.

- There are still 5 large growing churches in the city today. About a thousand believers there.
- In about the year 600 the domed Basilica of St. John was built, remains of which are the main archaeological attraction in the modern city.
- Many notable Bishops have come from Philadelphia.
- **As we conclude our study of the 7 churches, the last two churches are a comparison and contrast of the two churches of Laodicea and Philadelphia, we can see two kinds of churches:**
  - One is the church of open door.
  - The other is the church of the closed door.
  - One is faithful and true to the calling and vision.
  - The other is consumed with itself and is dying.
  - There are also “People of the Open Door” and “People of the Closed Door.” (Some people just seem to get all the breaks and amazing things happen through them and for them.)
- We are about to look at a faithful church, and church that has stayed true to the Word and the Spirit.

### Verse 7

**‘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.**

- When we are faithful, He is faithful; when the church stays true to her calling, the Lord will open doors for the gospel that no person can shut.
- It is interesting how many times God not only opens doors but also shuts them...We like to see the open doors, but sometimes it is hard to see God closed doors.

In Isaiah 22 God is speaking to Israel during a time not unlike the way we are living today:

**Isaiah 22:12-13**

**And in that day the Lord GOD of hosts  
Called for weeping and for mourning,  
For baldness and for girding with sackcloth.  
But instead, joy and gladness,  
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,  
Eating meat and drinking wine:  
"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"**

- Shebna, second in authority under the king—chamberlain and treasurer, is overseeing the treasury of the Lord and he was corrupt.

**Vs. 15**

**Thus says the Lord God of hosts:**

**"Go, proceed to this steward,  
To Shebna, who *is* over the house, *and say:***

**16**

**'What have you here, and whom have you here,  
That you have hewn a sepulcher here,  
As he who hews himself a sepulcher on high,  
Who carves a tomb for himself in a rock?**

**17**

**Indeed, the Lord will throw you away violently,  
O mighty man,  
And will surely seize you...  
So I will drive you out of your office,  
And from your position he will pull you down**

- Because of his works, his corruption, God is going to judge him and remove him from his position.
- The Lord is closing the door on Shebna! This is the God who closes door that no man can open!

**Vs. 20-22**

**'Then it shall be in that day,  
That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah;**

**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.**

- God will raise Eliakim up and give him the keys of David. The Lord is opening doors to Eliakim.
- God opens doors and closes doors .
- Philadelphia was on a main route into the eastern world. The Romans had it as an Imperial outpost and they called the city, "The Gateway to the East."
  - Gateway to Asia Minor and became known as a missionary sending location.

**Revelation 3:8**

**"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.**

- Salvation is by grace alone, not based on works, but open doors of opportunity is based on works—what we're doing with what we've been given.
- God opens doors of invitation and opportunity based on our works! God sees our works. All through Revelation 2-3, Jesus keeps repeating "I know your works."

- Only once does He say, I see your faith, rather “I see your works” because true faith shines through our works.
- We see what Jesus notices about our works:
  - **Rev 2:2 To the church at Ephesus: “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;**
  - **Rev 2:9 to the church in Smyrna: “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich);**
  - **Rev. 2:13 to the church at Pergamos: “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith.**
  - **Rev 2:19 to the church at Thyatira: “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last *are* more than the first.**
  - **Rev 3:1 to the church at Sardis: I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.**
- God opens and closes doors according to our “works” what we are doing—not what we say we believe in but what we do with what we have.

### **James 1:21-22**

**Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

- In other words, God opens opportunities and situations for us based on our works, being faithful to what we’ve been given—working the ground given to us, no matter how small and insignificant.
- Jesus told a parable about this...

## Luke 19:12

Therefore He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this *man* to reign over us.’

15 “And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ 17 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ 18 And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ 19 Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’

20 “Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. 21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ 22 And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. 23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’

24 “And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.’ 25 (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) 26 ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 27 But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.’”

### The Point of the Parable: 4 Parts

1. Apportioning. God apportions us all with gifts from Him, situations, even resources sovereignly given by Him that are not equal—some get 10, 5, and 1.
2. Accounting. God will demand to know what we’ve done with what we’ve been given by Him—it’s His stuff, His gifting—and He will want to know what we do with what we’ve been given.

3. Awards. Though the amounts may vary, the scales of God's justice are equal—we are all given a little bit, “very little” to be faithful with. If we are faithful with something small, God will open doors to more. God rewards faithfulness! Open doors!

**16 Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’  
17 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ 18 And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ 19 Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’**

But then there is this truth: “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.”

4. God also shuts doors according to our faithlessness to what He has provided to us.

**And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.’ 25 (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) 26 ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.**

- The Rich get richer and the poor get poorer—all according to our works!
- I think this has to do with every area of your life!
  - Finances, relationships, job, business, church life, marriage, parenting.
  - I learned to tithe my income, giving away 10% at 23 years of age...we have had some tough times and had to call out to God and He has always come through with cars, house, wells, college financing, etc.
  - I believe that for your young people, your being faithful in your dating relationships and how you are treating the opposite sex is setting you up for an open door to the one you will marry.



- God really notices our “works” and faithfulness.
  - This is the key to God opening doors! Being faithful to what God has called us to.
  - God doesn't give new orders until we are faithful with the old orders!
  - Salvation comes through faith, but open doors come through our works! What we do with what we've been given gets God's attention.
  - Do you want God to bless you with more open doors? He shows us God's prescription...

**Next week we will look at God's prescription for Open Doors...**