

Revelation 3:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Analysis

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man... This verse from Revelation's vision of letters to sardis, philadelphia, laodicea - dead religion, faithful witness, lukewarmness employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 3:7 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?
2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?

3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τῷ	ἀγγέλῳ	τῆς	ἐν	Φιλαδελφείᾳ	ἐκκλησίας	
And	G3588	to the angel	G3588	in	Philadelphia	of the church	
G2532		G32		G1722	G5359	G1577	
γράψον·	Τάδε	λέγει	ὁ	ἅγιος	ὁ	ἀληθινός	ὁ
write	These things	saith	G3588	he that is holy	G3588	he that is true	G3588
G1125	G3592	G3004		G40		G228	
ἔχων	τὴν	κλεῖδα	τοῦ	Δαβὶδ,	ὁ	ἀνοίγει·	καὶ
he that hath	G3588	the key	G3588	of David	G3588	he that openeth	And
G2192		G2807		G1138		G455	G2532
οὐδεὶς	κλείει	καὶ	κλείει	καὶ	οὐδεὶς	ἀνοίγει·	
no man	shutteth	And	shutteth	And	no man	he that openeth	
G3762	G2808	G2532	G2808	G2532	G3762	G455	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 22:22 (References David): And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Matthew 16:19 (Parallel theme): And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Revelation 1:18 (Parallel theme): I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Job 12:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

Revelation 6:10 (Holy): And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Isaiah 41:14 (Holy): Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Mark 1:24 (Holy): Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

John 14:6 (Truth): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Luke 1:32 (References David): He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

1 John 5:20 (Truth): And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.