

# Revelation 3:7–13

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[ 0 : 00 ] Revelation 3, verses 7-13, which can be found on page 1029 of the Blue Bible provided. That's Revelation 3, verses 7-13.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, the words of the Holy One, the True One, who is the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word, and have not denied my name.

Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not but lie. Behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you, because you have kept my word about patient endurance.

I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

[ 1 : 25 ] The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, in my own new name.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. The tower in London was begun in the 11th century under William the Conqueror, and its foundation stones are there to this day as a symbol for the power of the monarchy.

For over a millennium it has stood. And since the 14th century, in particular the year 1360, on every night of the calendar year, save two nights a year, Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, the guard has ceremonially, formally, locked the tower each and every night.

Even during the London raids, during World War II, the yeoman warder would adorn his head not with that soft, large black cap, but with an army helmet, and they would ceremoniously close the tower.

Imagine that for over 600 years, every night, even tonight. That will be done. Lisa and I have had the privilege of attending what is called the Ceremony of the Keys on two occasions.

[ 3 : 35 ] And you have to arrive with reservation made, ticket in hand, entrance through a particular point, led with a group of other tourists like yourself, no more than perhaps 20 in number per night.

And you then are brought to Trader's Gate inside the tower, and the gate behind you, and the stone stairs in the walkway in front of you, and at exactly 7 minutes to 10 p.m., the chief yeoman warder emerges from the byword tower in his long red coat.

And in one hand is a lantern lit by candle only, and in the other hand are the queen's keys. And they rattle as he rolls towards you, and he goes and locks one door, and you're silently, attentively watching, and soon he begins to traipse across Bloody Tower and Bayou and over to another gate. And a century stands guard, and you can barely see him in the darkness, but he yells out each and every night, Halt! Who comes there? To which the response of the chief yeoman warder is, The keys!

Whose keys? The queen's keys! To which the century then says, Pass!

[ 5 : 18 ] Queen's keys! All is well! They lock. They return quietly.

A man at either side. They retire for the evening. All is safe inside the tower. The place of protection.

The place where the crown jewels of the realm rest. And only those who have the keys are able to provide entrance in and out of the tower.

And so we have that in our own world, and yet we come to chapter 3 and verse 7, and we read these words.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write the words of the Holy One, the true One, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

[ 6 : 39 ] The Holy One, the true One, the keeper of the keys of David. Obviously, pulling the attentive reader of John's Apocalypse to the vision of the Son of Man in the first chapter.

verse 14, wherein we saw one who was white like wool, verse 14, eyes like a flame of fire, no little simple lantern candle here, feet burnished like bronze, refined in the furnace, a voice like the roar of many waters, the Holy Spirit all around him, and from his mouth a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like, and I love this phrase, the sun shining in full strength.

When I saw him, says John, who had this extraordinary invitation, he said he fell at his feet, though dead.

But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not. I am the first and the last and the living One. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore.

And here's our phrase, And I have the keys of death and Hades. What a great, great image.

[ 8 : 12 ] The Christian message proclaims that to Jesus of Nazareth was given by his death and righteousness and resurrection.

The key of David. Total, absolute, eternal authority over the entrance into the city of God to the new Jerusalem.

Into his presence. This one and this one alone holds the key. The illusion is so much stronger than to England's realm or empire.

We are speaking here of the curtain being pulled back on human history, of the reader being able to see for herself. The ascendant Christ who has been given supreme rule over all the earth.

Keys rattling at his side. No transfer ever needed. No entrance ever given. No exit deemed necessary under his righteous and eternal reign.

[ 9 : 35 ] The image of Revelation 3 runs not to England but to Isaiah.

Isaiah. Isaiah is the one who pulled the language of the keys into the house of David concerning the entrance into Jerusalem.

I want you to see it for yourself. I want you to turn back to Isaiah 22. Isaiah 22 is a chapter wherein there is an oracle concerning Jerusalem and the oracle is one of God's judgment upon an unworthy steward for not protecting the city under righteousness and justice.

And so the chapter when you get home this evening and re-read it depicts one who had been the custodian with the key but who had served unworthily.

And therefore God's judgment was careening against his own house and the walls were broken down and the enemy was running through the breach.

[ 11 : 12 ] He says in verse 15 thus says the Lord God of hosts come go to this steward to Shebna who was over the household and say to him what have you done here?

Verse 17 behold the Lord will hurl you away violently O you strong man he will whirl you around verse 18 and around and throw you like a ball into a wide land and there you shall die and there shall your glorious chariots and the shame of your master's house and I will thrust you from your office and you will be pulled down from your station and in that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah and I will clothe him with your robe and will bind your sash on him and will commit your authority to his hand and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah and I verse 22 will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David he shall open and none shall shut and he shall shut and none shall open and I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house and they will hang on him the whole honor of his father's house the offspring and issue every small vessel from the cups to all the flagons the the image in Isaiah was of the transfer of the key to the house of David from an unworthy custodian to a worthy one and it primarily signified entrance into the city so when you begin to follow through the text of Isaiah had we an hour rather than 15 more minutes when you begin to follow through the text of Isaiah you begin to see that the gates would be opened or shut in order that the righteous might enter in so the keeper of the keys permitted entrance only to the righteous so you begin to see that in Isaiah when you pick up the thread and you look in places like chapter 26 of Isaiah and verse 2 open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in that was the purpose of the key to allow entrance in but only to the righteous and the custodian Eliakim was as it said in chapter 22 fastened like a peg in the house what great imagery his predecessor all the walls were tumbling and they were actually tearing down homes in order to fill

the breach in the wall but the faithful custodian he'll be fastened fixed immovable in the house of the living God so that later when you get to chapter 56 in Isaiah and this is worth at least seeing and marking for later reading and discussion when you get to Isaiah chapter 56 in verse 5 you begin to see that even outsiders those who were not born into the Jewish faith and into the promises of Abraham even the outsiders have entrance into the great kingdom through the gate so in chapter 56 verse 5 we read

I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off and the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister to him to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast my covenant these I will bring to my holy mountain I will make them joyful in the house of prayer their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples the Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel declares I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered that is the rich isianic history of revelation 3 7 to 13 pulling on all of those threads so that when you turn back to our text you begin to read it according to an interpretive grid put forth in God's word through the prophets so we have now verse 7 the one who has the key of David none other than

Jesus we have this wonderful entrance into the city we have knowledge now of what it means to have an open door it's an open door verse 8 I know your works behold I have set before you an open door means an open door into God's presence there's an open door through the one who has the keys and it goes on in chapter 3 picking up on all of those threads in Isaiah calling upon them to hold fast verse 11 just as Isaiah said to those who hold fast as well as the name and being fixed like a pillar verse 12 the one who conquers I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God never shall he go out of it and I will write on him the name of my

[17:20] God and the name of the city of my God the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven and my own new name we receive in Christ entrance into the very presence of the living God and we are fixed fastened kept so that when the call comes upon your death and mine and our spirits are released from the frailty of this fleshly body and we ascend to the gates which will happen to us all I think of seeing Mandy in our own congregation just a week or two ago and in a moment standing at the gate and the call goes forth who comes there a daughter a daughter of who the king of kings the lord Jesus Christ to the one to whom you have given all authority and reign and rule pass daughter of Eve all is well this is the Christian message that in Jesus of Nazareth a door has been pushed back and across the threshold of faith you and I amidst all of our stuff can have entrance and through Christ no one can keep you from it no one will be able to shut that door on you or me praise God this is the message that was given to the church in Philadelphia because they needed shoring up in the most difficult day for the exclusive claim of the Christian message is this that there is no other name by which we may be saved than Jesus they began to proclaim that in their earthquake ridden village they didn't have much money or power the word began to go out they held it faithfully and the gates of hell could not prevail against it and it spread they needed encouragement because when one begins to hold to the exclusivity of Christ it will lead to the exclusion of the Christian now this is important for you and for me to know that in verses eight and nine he speaks of those who are what he calls the synagogue of Satan it's very difficult for us to understand being in America we are a Christian community presently meeting within the Jewish synagogue but in Philadelphia this would not happen they had not the protections or the privileges incredible privileges that you and I have in this very neighborhood thanks be to God but in Philadelphia when they began to hold to the exclusive claims of Christ it led to the exclusion of the Christian

to their being thrown out of the synagogue this adherence that those who were in Christ were not of God's people that's certainly the case in almost every other country in the world today we are so privileged to live where we do and to have the free exchange of religious plurality of ideas not in a way in which they are all relativized and stood on their own as to mean nothing but in a way in which they are able to compete freely for the mind and heart of the listener with equity fairness sympathy humility and ongoing charity they of course didn't have that privilege and so they needed these encouraging words upon which he closes

I will keep you from the hour of trial coming upon the whole earth 10 to 13 I will make you a pillar in the household of my God I love that phrase especially if you know Philadelphia's history AD 17

wrecked by an earthquake and they were such an impoverished congregation they almost leaned entirely on Rome to be able to rebuild the city they didn't have their internal resources in Philadelphia to get much done and he says in that kind of a congregation he says I will make you a pillar of the house of my God and I will write on him the name which is above every name well today I would encourage you to submit your life to the one who is Jesus Lord over all for it won't be long before we stand and watch him make his walk he is the door the only entrance into heaven Willy celebrate ten years today it's an interesting thing ten year birthday party ten years ago today this weekend a friend of Holy Trinity was with us he spoke at our founding service his name is Dick Lucas he's now the retired rector of St.

Helens Bishop's Gate within the Anglican Communion in City Centre London The day before our founding service, he was with John and myself, and we were walking him through the streets of Hyde Park.

[ 24 : 11 ] We walked him up to the little chapel at Chicago Theological Seminary. If you're relatively new to Holy Trinity, that's where we began. And the upstairs chapel, without air conditioning, was a rather brutal place to begin in the midst of the summer of 98.

But there we were, a band of low 30s who had commenced our work together. And he stood on the platform with the Gothic cross above us in the chapel with this great wood arching it.

And if you stand at the back of the chapel, you'll see the very architectural pinnacle is to go right through the cross into the stained glass, into the heart of Christ on the stained glass.

It's absolutely magnificent. You'll have to go there sometime. It's worth your journey. It's where we started. And he stood on that platform and he said, well, let's pray. And in his English way, he prayed.

It wasn't long. And he said, well, Lord, it seems as if you've opened a door. And when you open a door, no one can shut it.

[ 25 : 17 ] He referenced this very text. And he spoke to us as a congregation on that night of founding.

He said, when God opens a door, no one can shut it. And he spoke of his own experience in London when God called him to the city for the gospel. And when he said no one can shut it, he then said, but many will give it a jolly good try.

I find that to be true. When God opens a door, it takes everything you've got to get through it. But the church of Philadelphia knew that.

The door was wide in Christ, but the need for patient endurance was lifelong. And so it shall be for our work. So we come on a privileged day.

If it's your first day here, well, happy birthday to you, too. I hope the next ten years the lifting won't quite be so heavy as the first ten, but it won't bother me if it is.

[ 26 : 33 ] For the work is glorious. The gospel is great. The city in which we live is spectacular. Its citizenry is open.

So let's celebrate today over meal and cake. But let's never forget that he opened the door for the nations.

All the nations. My brothers from Uganda. All the nations. Amen. May that happen here.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this ten-year celebration, for the presence of birthday cake, but most especially and more importantly, the glory of the meal in which we now partake.

Strengthen us in the one who has the keys. And thank you. We treasure our knowledge that in him we have access and an eternal inheritance in the city of God, the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven.

[ 28 : 00 ] We pray in his name, this great one, the Son of Man. Amen. Thank you.