



## Daily Verse and Comment

### Revelation 3:7-8

(7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write: These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens.

(8) I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

*A Faithful Version*

Christ quotes [Isaiah 22:22](#) in the preamble of His letter to the church at Philadelphia. In identifying Himself to the church, He quotes what He said through Isaiah concerning Eliakim. If we want to understand the [letter to Philadelphia](#), we must begin with this reference. [Jesus](#) clarifies that Eliakim's role was a type of the [stewardship](#) role that He Himself now fills. In quoting Isaiah, Jesus declares that He is the ultimate fulfillment of Eliakim's position as steward of the house.

In verse 8, Christ announces that He has set [an open door](#) before this church and tells them *why*.

It is imperative to catch the way Jesus says this. The reason they have an open door is *because* they have a little strength, have kept His Word, and have not denied His name. Thus, He mentions the open door in response to their condition coupled with their [faithfulness](#). We need to grasp this to recognize what the open door is. The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* captures this aspect well: “[I know your works](#). Because you have limited strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name, look, I have placed before you an open door that no one is able to close.”

What is this open door? The conventional interpretation among those who have come out of the [Worldwide Church of God](#) is that Christ has given the

Philadelphians an open door *to preach [the gospel](#)*, an idea that is not without merit. In three of Paul's epistles, he uses an open door as a metaphor for an opportunity to preach ([I Corinthians 16:9](#); [II Corinthians 2:12](#); [Colossians 4:3](#)). But this metaphor has no connection at all to Christ's quotation of [Isaiah 22:22](#). Even so, we will follow the rabbit hole to see where this typically leads us.

Christ promises to keep the Philadelphians from the hour of trial, boosting the importance of being a Philadelphian because it involves protection during the Tribulation. Consequently, it then becomes imperative to determine which church group appears to have *the* open door to preach the gospel, because—the reasoning goes—[God](#) will protect that group.

Suddenly, a tremendous interest then arises in accumulating “proof” of an open door, since it will apparently establish that a group is Philadelphian and guaranteed protection. The “proof” is then held up as the reason all church members should join that group instead of another. But when this is the primary approach, what people usually focus on are not the things that truly matter but numbers—like how many radio or television stations the group is on, how many new people are attending services, how many subscribers or website hits it receives, or what percentage of its income a group spends on preaching the gospel.

We can add to this heady mix the incongruity of boasting about preaching the gospel with great strength. Remember, Christ identifies the Philadelphians as having only “a little strength”! It cannot be both ways.

The idea has been that, if we want to be protected and to “escape all these things which will come to pass” ([Luke 21:36](#)), we have to be with the group whose door to preach the gospel is open just a little wider than the rest. Yet, if our motivation is nothing more than self-preservation, something is dreadfully wrong. Christ specifically warns of this approach when He says that he who seeks to save his life will lose it ([Luke 9:24](#); [17:33](#)).

When the open door is interpreted to mean an opportunity to preach the gospel, the fruit has been exclusivity, comparing ourselves among ourselves ([II Corinthians 10:12](#)), division, competition, and a pitiful supply of love—[works of the flesh](#) rather than [fruit of the Spirit](#). This occurs largely because

people keep pushing God and all He is doing out of the picture. It is easy to focus on the works of men—which harkens back to God's controversy with Shebna the scribe, who was replaced by Eliakim because of ostentation and presumption, focusing on his own affairs and his place in history rather than in simply doing his job ([Isaiah 22:15-20](#)).

— David C. Grabbe

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