

# THE ROAD TO PHILADELPHIA

THE ROAD TO  
PHILADELPHIA

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF KNOWLEDGE

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*Dedicated to Bo, whom I loved more than a  
brother*

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## FORWARD

Religionists of any era “*love the praise of men more than the praise of God*”. John 12:43 In our Lord’s time, it was the chief rulers of the synagogues who believed on Him but refused to confess Him because they didn’t want to lose their jobs. It was as simple as that. This is an ongoing problem. The Lord Jesus forcefully dealt with it when He warned His power-struck disciples not to exult over spiritual gifts but, rather, to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. We can never be reminded enough that Jesus told us that some would do mighty works, even cast out demons, in His name. Yet, He would have to say of them: “*I never knew you.*” Matt 7:23

In John 7:24 our Lord both warns and commands: “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*”. Just as it was not enough for the ancient synagogue rulers to believe on Jesus, yet refuse to confess Him; so, it is not enough for modern Christians to receive the Holy Spirit with His spiritual gifts without the determination to

continually yield to Him. Seven times the Spirit speaks to the churches in the book of Revelation so that we may understand what the church consists of and is really all about. Seven times in the Epistles the Holy Ghost inspires the writers to expound upon those foundational topics of which we must not be ignorant. As it was prophesied that the Messiah's presence and preaching would dissipate the gloom and bring brightness to a land and people dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death, so it was promised to the Church that vast areas of ignorance and confusion would be enlightened and clarified by the teaching office of the Holy Ghost, the One sent by Jesus and given by the Father to lead us into all truth. Seven is God's number for perfection and completion. In both the Old and New Testaments, God used units of seven to represent perfect or complete service: the seven years that Jacob labored for Rachel and the seven deacons chosen in Acts. Important life-fulfilling or life-threatening events such as years of fruitfulness and famine, degrees or levels of punishment, formulas for obedience, a spirit of perfect prayer, as well as the perfect completion of Messiah's mission are all described in segments of seven. In the Gospels, forgiveness is related to multiples of seven. We mentioned that Seven Churches are addressed in Revelation. It



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should also be noted that Paul's Epistles are sent to Seven distinct Churches. The consummation of all things, especially the important topic of judgment is connected with the number seven. Hebrews 6:1 gives perfection itself as the seventh item or goal in a series of doctrines the Holy Ghost wants to teach us: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment.

Most of us feel fairly confident in handling the problems and situations that life throws at us. We rely instinctively upon our innate ability and our past experience. The challenge of "the Seven Pillars of Knowledge" is to set aside these carnal weapons, repent of our spiritual ignorance, listen attentively to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, and learn from His quickening Word where the battle really is.

## PART I

# “I WOULD NOT BRETHREN, THAT YOU SHOULD BE IGNORANT”

A group of Pentecostals assemble for a Sunday morning of singing and service in Trinidad only to get the shock of their lives when an airplane crashes into their church killing a handful of the congregation. In Balvano, Italy an earthquake hits without warning causing the marble roof of a five hundred year old Catholic church to come toppling in on three hundred horrified parishioners. A sunny, breezy Sunday morning in Texas is turned into a lifetime's nightmare when a crazed gunman enters the church and opens fire on the congregation with an automatic rifle. And there is the infamous Jim Jones and the nine hundred members of the People's Temple who, while still members "in good standing"

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of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination, conspire to kill women and children before carrying out their devilish suicide pact, It is not enough to be a Christian by label only!

I have seen like-tragedies in my personal walk with the Lord. I have seen wandering pastors die in lover's suicide pacts; I have seen backslidden Christians meet their end suddenly without notice. Each time I hear of such things I have a feeling of awe and inevitably I think of the warning Christ gave to his disciples. The passage can be found in Luke chapter 13.

*“There were present that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*

*And Jesus answering them said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all Galilaeus, because they suffered such things?*

*I tell you, Nay; except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*

*I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

We must all repent. Most Jews thought they had a

right to salvation; they thought being a Jew by birth was enough. The Christian world has lived by the same delusion and yet our experience, as well as Christ's own words, tell us different. Jesus warned his Church that in the last days it would be as in the days of Noah. The Church has correctly surmised that Christ meant the world would be full of sin and corruption just before his return, but it has failed to consider that Noah was alone in his preaching. For 125 years Noah warned the world of coming judgment while everyone mocked God. As the end approaches if the parallel continues then we might guess that preachers of God's judgment and the warning of Christ's imminent return will be mocked even by much of the Church.

Generally speaking the Church (that means the body of Christ in its widest sense, complete with its sins and false doctrines, including all the denominations with their tares that the enemy has sown among the wheat) for centuries was complacent and ignorant. If the Church were a football team it would be a perpetual cellar dweller; if it were a corporation it would have gone bankrupt long ago; if it were a school it would have lost its accreditation. Ironically the Church has spent its resources and energy trying, to be those three things (and more) they have put their efforts into sports,

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schooling and being a profitable corporation while neglecting what its true calling is: being the body of Christ specializing in faith, hope and love. The Church is supposed to direct people to repentance so they can live godly lives. Instead much of the Church sits like the people in Trinidad and Balvano, thinking they are secure under the umbrella of God's protection, but in reality they sit spinning precariously on the wheel of fortune, just waiting for their number to come up.

Stop and think. No one can possibly know for certain what tomorrow may hold for them personally. It is one of Man's great delusions to think he is in control of his life. God could require our soul before we take our next breath. We ought to be prepared to meet him at any moment, but how many of us, how much of the Church, is ready for that moment? Jesus asked the question himself, "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" If Jesus were to return to earth today would he find his Church full of faith? Would he find a Church full of repentant hearts?

I do not, however, want this to be an indictment of the Church, or purely an expose of bad religion, that is a little too much like shooting ducks in a barrel. Rather, I hope this will be an exhortation to faith. I trust that the truth told in love will cut across

denominational lines and crack the ignorance of traditional religious dogmas. I am hoping that those seeking deliverance from the small world of denominational teachings, who want the freedom of the Holy Spirit to run like flowing waters in their lives, will be able to rejoice over the things in this work. If I am true to saying only what the Holy Ghost has showed me then I am confident that what I have set out to do, which is to edify the Church, will be done.

I believe there is a part of the Church that is looking for that kind of freedom. I also believe that Noah was not the last ark, but a forerunner of things to come, a prototype ark, and that today God is raising up of faith, in people's homes, in small fellowships, in quiet places; all are built on the strong foundation of an intimate walk with Jesus. The unity of this church, this invisible church, is hard to detect, but real. As all great masterpieces of God this church has to be received by faith, but every once in awhile the Lord may give us a token of its existence.

# AN EXAMPLE OF THIS INVISIBLE CHURCH

God once used two of my best friends in the Lord (my mother and stepfather) to give us a glimpse of the reality of this invisible church. Though simple and short, this spiritual vignette was the inspiration for the title of this work. My mother's letter to a couple they once met on the road to Philadelphia serves as a window into this place called: *The Philadelphia Church*.

“Dear ...

We were so thrilled to hear from you, and meeting on the turnpike was also for us unbelievably exciting, edifying, and a great comfort! Yes, truly the way we met was a perfect example of how personal God is, so much that we can be sure that he does number the very hairs of our head.

We have used the testimony of our meeting often too. One of the main ways we have shared about it is

with our own small fellowship. We here have spent much time studying and reading (first the Scriptures, then other books) about the Philadelphia Church of Revelation, 3:7-13, as well as spending long hours sharing and discussing what it really means. At first it was just the four of us [my parents, myself, and my wife] then more as the Lord added them to our number one by one. As soon as we get past salvation and the baptism of the Holy Ghost we have been led to go directly to prophecy, and especially to the seven letters to the churches in Revelation.

The Spirit has always – automatically led us to start teaching about the Philadelphia church. We face questions like: Who is the Philadelphia church? What makes one a member? Where can you find or see her? What does Jesus Say about her? What does he promise her? What does he exhort her to do? And what kind of power does she have? I'm saying this because I have a point – and you are it!

We were able to go home and tell our little portion of the body of Christ that on the Pennsylvania Turnpike we had seen and fellowshipped, for a brief moment, with a part of that glorious church, the Philadelphia Church, who will be without spot or wrinkle. HALLELUJAH!!

We do believe and teach that the Philadelphia church is the “blessed company of faithful



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believers”, faithful to their first love, Jesus, and that they come from every kindred, tongue, and nation. In other words they are all over the world. One can’t see that church, for only God knows who they all are, but once in a while he slips us a glimpse of who they are. We believe that is what he did for us in early November 1984 on the Penn Turnpike. For our edification and to build our faith for its existence he gave us a sample of his Philadelphia Church. We are part of the body, he is the head.

To make his point even clearer God had the two of us, Roy and me, act out the significance of our meeting in a sort of two act play.

A few years ago on our way to see our daughter, as we were high up on the bridge that crosses from New Jersey into Pennsylvania, we looked toward Philadelphia and could see its skyline, but it was veiled by clouds and mist. It was the first time either of us (who had both lived in its suburbs at a point in our lives) had seen the city from that far away perspective. We could see it – but then again we couldn’t see it. We knew at once that the Lord had shown us this as a symbol the Philadelphia Church; to confirm that it is not easily seen, it is veiled, and yet is very real. We were so blessed by this glimpse...

After our meeting with you we discussed how God had given us an oasis of fellowship in the

Philadelphia spirit. We had seen the Philadelphia we love that day when we saw you; but, still, on the way across that bridge the next day we foolishly stretched our necks to see the city of Philadelphia again.

As I recall the timing, it was almost immediate that I got the question in my heart rather loudly: Why was I looking for that physical sign once more? The answer came at once.

We had just seen and fellowshipped with the Philadelphia Church the evening before. All four of us were travelling on the road to Philadelphia. We had not experienced a mere symbol, as by the glimpse of the city a few years earlier, but this time, we had partaken of the real thing...”

My mother’s letter is an example of living prophecy. The moral of the story is that the angel of the Philadelphia Church is still taking care of its faith, still watching after his candlestick’s flame, just as Revelation promises. The Philadelphia faith, while the hardest to see, is still as real as the air we breath, real as any established denomination, real as Christ in our lives, real as the demon world we battle. It is everywhere and yet nowhere. It may even be fair to say that the “Philadelphia” faith is the mature expression of the born-again faith.

I am convinced that the greatest calling of the

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Church is being broadcast by the angel of Philadelphia in these times. Give it an ear.

The road to Hell, as the old proverb correctly warns, is paved with good intentions, and one can add – has guardrails of ignorance, exits of worldly concern, and has faithlessness as its vehicle. The road is dark and the way unclear. The road to Philadelphia, on which two couples met briefly to share their common hope and faith in Christ, is paved by determination and faith the same discipline that drives a Michael Jordan to be the best he can be or makes a General a great military leader. The road to Philadelphia has guardrails of knowledge, hope and love. There are no exits, the road is straight and narrow. The Holy Ghost pilots the vehicle fueled by faith. Prophecy and God's word lights the way. The destination is to be nothing short of becoming a disciple that is glued to Christ.

The license you will need is stamped born-again. If you are not born-again, hop in the back seat anyway and come along for the ride. Let's get on the spiritual Pennsylvania Turnpike and purchase, by faith, a non-stop, one-way ticket for Philadelphia.

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## I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU TO BE IGNORANT, BRETHREN

Ignorance in the world may be bliss, in the spiritual world it is deadly. It invites trouble and above all it invites God's wrath and judgment. The story of Josiah and the judgment of Judah illustrates how God's judgment, once it has been pronounced through his prophets, will not be deterred.

Josiah was one of the finest kings the Jewish nation ever had. He was godly, obedient, and humble. The Bible testifies that Josiah *"did right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or the left."* As a king, and as a man beloved of God, Josiah stands alongside David. He was a man after God's own heart. But by the time the eight year-old Josiah came to the throne, God had already determined that judgment was going to soon fall on Judah. Even before Judah's birth God had signaled the end of the nation through his prophets and the Lord had no intention of turning back judgment's wrath, not even for one of the godliest kings Israel had known during its three hundred year monarchy.

Generations of evil had pressed God's patience to exhaustion. Judah was overflowing with every kind of sin and perversion. Idolatry was the toast of

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Judaism; adultery, fornication, violence, deceit, and bribery infested every part of its culture and society. Judgment had already fallen on the other half of the Jewish nation, Israel, when Assyria overran the ten tribes living in Judah's sister state and dispersed them into surrounding nations as slaves. And Judah's sins were even worse than those of her sister Israel!

For her abominable ways she was about to be destroyed. Yet standing under this "sword of Damocles" stood Josiah with his heart set on doing the will of God. Eighteen years into Josiah's reign, when the king was twenty-six years old, a great thing happened to both him and the nation. In that year Josiah, impassioned in behalf of the Lord, began a restoration of the temple. He made the arrangements, begun to raise the money and hire the workman and then suddenly, in the midst of the labor, the High Priest made an unbelievable discovery in the holy place. There, under the dust and among the cobwebs, Hilkiah found the book of the law, the Holy Scriptures, lost and long forgotten by the uncaring priests and religious leaders of ignorant Judah. The teachings in the book of the law had been ignored for so long that Josiah, though a full adult at the age of twenty-six, was completely unfamiliar with the contents and will of God's law.

The leader of God's chosen people was ignorant as sin and as a nation the Jews were no better off than their king. All that remained of God's will was a few measly traditional symbols that had been rendered meaningless by Israel's idolatrous ways.

Josiah was horrified when he heard what was written in the book of the law and what it expected of God's people. Josiah could see his nation's crimes. He could not help but see how ignorant, how blasphemous, how corrupt and idolatrous his people had become. In an open show of repentance he rent his clothes and wept before the Lord to show his sorrow. His tears were not only tears of sorrow however, for this young, godly man sensed that judgment was due.

The following day Josiah's worst suspicions were confirmed when God sent a woman prophetess to tell Josiah what must be:

*“Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:*

*Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.*

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*But to the king of Judah... because thine heart was tender and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when you heard what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and have rent your clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.*

*Behold therefore I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and you shall be gathered into thy grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.” 2 Kings: 22:16-20*

Because of his repentant heart Josiah was spared the terror and grief of the coming horrors. As for Judah, it was all over *but* the crying just as it is for the bogus churches of Christ today. Judgment was on its way then and it is on its way now. All of the scandals and deception, the greed and lewdness, the lying and corruption of the churches of all denominations are already being visited by God are they not?

This young man, Josiah, could have chosen to ignore the revival of truth that came with the rediscovery of God’s word and carried on business as usual; that would have been the expedient thing to do. Instead, however, Josiah took the message to heart and immediately instituted a methodical and

thorough cleansing of the nation. But it was a personal matter for him and not collective. So it is today. Each one must walk with integrity of spirit in Christ. Josiah is exemplary. I can pray to be like him. Anything that contradicted the book was squelched. The book was read to all the people and, before the entire nation, Josiah made a personal pact in his heart by his own volition between he and God to live by everything that was written in the book. We who do this now have the chance of getting all the help we need by the Holy Spirit to aid and teach us to live this otherwise impossible life. Proving his utter devotion to God, Josiah purged the country of idolatry, had the false prophets and witches slain and cut off every connection with paganism and worldly devotion. In that year Josiah sponsored the feast of passover, God's word reporting that it was kept more perfectly than it had ever had been celebrated before or thereafter. Even more perfectly than in the days of King David himself.

Josiah continued to follow God all the days of his life; for that God spared the upright king from having to see the terrifying judgment which was shortly to fall on God's people. At the age of 39 Josiah was, as the scripture put it: "*gathered to his fathers*" His kingdom was still in tact, his household still thriving, his honor still great. But it was time for



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judgment and not even God's love for the faithful Josiah could stay the hand of the avenging angels of judgment any longer. Three months after Josiah's death the judgment of Judah began when King Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, was killed by the armies of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Judah became the battleground for Babylon and Egypt to see who would control God's kingdom in Judah. Eventually, the king, a son of Josiah, that had ascended to the shaky throne, Jehoiakim by name, had his eyes plucked out and was taken bound like a slave, along with the remnant of Jewish people into Babylon. For seventy years the Jews languished in Babylon.

If it were not for his repentant heart and his willingness to confess his ignorance, a similar fate would have most certainly been in store for Josiah. Instead, Josiah had this epitaph given him by Yahweh himself:

*“Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.*

*Notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah...*

*And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out*

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*of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I have said, My name shall be there.”*  
2 Kings 23:25-27

Can this story be applied to today's Church? Spiritually speaking there is very little difference between the Jew's experience and that of the Church. Everything seems to be what will God give me and do for me, never what can I do for God, what should I do for him who gave his life for me? The prosperity message, the positive thinking as a creed, the Santa Claus mentality, the allegiance to worldly government and the protestant ethic is shouted from the pulpit and sparks out from our TV screens pervading the hearts of innocent dupes and lustful Christians crying out for more from their pews and folding chairs in their ecumenical churches and cathedrals. While at home they live in the lure of the world and chase after its various pots of gold believing erroneously that God will make all their dreams come true.

Man's heart is the same whether Jew or Gentile. Josiah lived at a time when judgment was about to fall; so do we. Josiah's only escape was a repentant and fervent heart toward God; so it is with us. Josiah lived in an hour when God's mercy was needed in a

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personal way to deliver one from the wrath to come; so too, we need God's mercy and deliverance if we are to escape the coming judgment. There are many signs and warnings that give the Church cause to believe we are living in the final hours before Jesus's return, and like Josiah's generation, we could easily be the last generation of believers able to heed God's word. The fullness of the Gospel has been "dusted off" by the Holy Ghost just as it was in the days of Josiah. A revival of knowledge concerning the great truths of Christ hovers over the Church as never before. The fulfillment of all aspects of prophecy showers the earth with the truth that Jesus is coming soon. The wonderful truths of the New Testament have exposed the idolatry and perversion of the Church just as the rediscovery of the book of the law had exposed the ignorance and disregard for God and His word in Josiah's day. A love affair with the world has obscured vision and knowledge in the Church, making her people and leaders ignorant as sin, just as it had in Israel's day of judgment.

God, as He did with Josiah, is staying his judgment for a moment thanks to the rain of the Holy Ghost which is producing a reign of repentance for individuals. As Josiah, we ought to be horrified when we see the awful ignorance concerning God's word among his people. When we

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see it we should rent our hearts open, as Josiah rent open his clothes, in a show of repentance before God.

## WE MUST KNOW THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE

There may have been a time when ignorance of the scriptural truths concerning salvation, the Holy Ghost, the Jews, the fruits of the Spirit, fellowship, and judgment, was winked at by God. Who knows? None of us lived in those dark days of apostasy when false doctrine so ruled the Church that it may have been impossible for a man to climb out of the deep abyss of ignorance in just one lifetime. But that was then, and this is now, and one thing is certain; if we are to prosper spiritually we should know the times in which we live. It doesn't take much spiritual discernment to understand that we live in a continual paradox, a time of both revival and impending judgment.

In our time, the Church (which includes all its denominations), has been visited by the Holy Ghost. In great power the Spirit of God has brought a "rebirth" of knowledge and faith. He has taken the apostate Christian world by storm and offered men and women of every denomination and walk of life

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a full and deep relationship with God. These are exciting days, but perilous at the same time. As the apostle Paul in his letters to the churches declared they would be.

Christ is ministering in a personal way, just as he did at his first coming, while God is preparing to judge the earth. We are living in the midst of the latter day rain prophesied by the prophet Joel. The great outpouring of the Spirit over the last two and a half decades and the revival of the nation of Israel in 1948 after two thousand years of lying dormant are the two greatest signs of the last days. The Church will do good to take heed. God is preparing for the big harvest, but do not be deceived, he is also preparing to plow the earth.

To shine with the saints in these last hours we must be willing to “unlearn” our apostate traditions and our preconceived notions about God. The individual must stop sinning the sins of the ignorant Church without seeking the help of those ignorant churches that keep on with their delusions and allegiances to the world’s faith in governments and false religions that are masquerading as human sciences. The thirst for knowledge must not merely be sublimated by God’s knowledge, but the knowledge of God’s will must be the sum and substance of a Christian’s search for knowledge that

gives true understanding which leads to actual wisdom for living. One must thirst after God's will. One must let the Holy Ghost be the tutor and leader into all truth. Only then can a person discover what God really means by love. What godly fruits really are. How one can best relate to the Jews in the difficult times. And what the true essence, evidence and experience of faith actually is for a true disciple of God. In each case we find that the notions that the World presents are sold as being God's but are usually just the opposite, and that the saying, "*God's ways are not man's ways*", are vitally true and important to keep in mind. When one becomes born-again one needs also to be schooled again, learn to walk again, to talk again, to see again, understand again.

If we profess Christ, and yet do not come to him as a child, but rather remain puffed up with religious pride, we will remain in darkness. If we live by some kind of bogus faith of the intellect and worship things falsely labeled as Jesus Christ then, in spite of our pious appearance or church membership, we shall remain a captive of sin. In this way religion is a stumbling block for Christians just as it was for the Jews. We tend to be blind to our own ignorance. Light has returned to the Church through a revival of truth in the 'last days', but most churches and

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believers make the error of Israel by continuing to worship in the old ways, worshipping traditions and systems inherited from the great falling away (or defection from truth, as it can be translated), causing our sins of ignorance and unbelief to remain. Like coal miners most of the churches came out of the depths of darkness to stand in the light, but like the soot, sin clings to those who have not been thoroughly “*washed in the water of the word*”. The light of revival is bright, all the more easily is seen the grime and soot of deep ignorance in the brilliant light of revival. The Church today will do well to appreciate the irony of Christ’s words when speaking to the religious leaders of Israel when he remarked:

*“...For judgement I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.*

*And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him: “Are we blind also?”*

*Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you should have no sin: but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth. John 9:39-41*

The way to end ignorance is by having a broken

spirit and a contrite heart toward Christ. The conversion of the apostle Paul serves as the universal example:

Paul, testified of his own ignorance when he said, *“I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of which I am chief.”* Paul did not make excuse for his sin; to the contrary he admitted to being chief among all sinners. A heavy statement, but not overly dramatic or exaggeration, Paul believed it to be wholly true. So we see the quintessential religious stalwart who, truth be known, is *“chief among sinners”*. At the time of his transformation he was a celebrated and recognized man of God, a religious leader among God’s chosen people; a man of respect and authority. He was, by all appearances, a zealous defender of the sacred teachings and traditions of the religion of the ‘elect’. He carefully followed what he believed were God’s commandments, but for all his good intentions and zeal towards God he was ignorant of the knowledge of the living God, to the point where he had become a persecutor and a blasphemer. He was injurious to the cause of God



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and ruinous of the humble and true followers of Jesus Christ. If he was not already, he could have easily become one of those men that Jesus called “*a whited sepulcher*” – clean and pure on the outside, but stinking like a dead body on the inside.

What changed Paul? A personal relationship with Jesus changed his nature to the core. When the living Christ revealed himself to Paul on the road to Damascus Paul received Christ with a humble heart. It figures that Christ struck Paul blind. The apostle’s blindness graphically illustrated his spiritual condition. Paul was ignorant and that ignorance made it so he could not see spiritual truth. When the Lord identified himself to Paul and told Paul that he was persecuting the Lord by persecuting the Church, Paul responded by humbly repenting. “*And he trembling and astonished said, ‘Lord what will you have me to do?’*”. Christ included as part of his overall ministry giving sight to the blind, both literal and spiritual, so he did it for Paul his apostle to the gentiles.

The prime step in ending our ignorance is to acknowledge our fat heart and stiff neck, to turn as Paul did with trembling and ask the Lord, “What do you want me to do?”. Then we have a full chance at seeing spiritual truth, that truth and reality which no material or carnal eye can see. After being taken

to the home of a saint, Paul's blindness was lifted and he began to truly serve the living God. What saved Paul in his moment of truth was the condition of his heart. He was willing to admit his ignorance in favor of accepting God's truth. He was willing to let the Holy Spirit take him by the hand and lead him like a little child or a blind man being led to the light where he could now see.

The Church's greatest responsibility in this hour is to let the Holy Ghost lead. The individual must let the Spirit of Christ guide us into all truth, just as Jesus promised the Holy Ghost could and would do – if we will allow Him to lead. Let us let him. He will tutor those who daily consent to His leadership and guidance through the Holy Scriptures. Those that allow Him will not be found ignorant in the faith, ignorant sinful brethren caught up in the thick of judgement as it continues to fall on the earth everywhere with prophetic tenacity. Instead, the simple believer can be proud of this one thing, that they have a repentant heart, that Christ may establish them and make them members of the household of faith, loving in truth, full of good fruit, having a real relationship with the Holy Spirit that creates full confidence toward God and excellent knowledge of Jesus as their kind and loving Lord and

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Savior. As the scriptures adjure repeatedly: Let us not be ignorant, brethren.

PART II

THE SEVEN  
PILLARS OF  
KNOWLEDGE

The Seven Pillars Of Knowledge

# INTRODUCTION

## *Wisdom Hath Builded Her House*

The church has a perfect and everlasting example of wisdom in everything that our Lord Jesus has ever said or done; and will ever do or say. Jesus and wisdom are one and the same. The Scriptures say that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The marvelously rich treasure house of wisdom and knowledge is revealed throughout the Bible. The book of Proverbs is essentially devoted to both spiritual and natural wisdom. The topic entitled: *The Seven Pillars of Knowledge* expounds on the seven places in the New Testament where God's Word expressly urges the believer to "not be ignorant". These seven places I have dubbed "pillars of knowledge". They are by no means the only areas in the Gospel where God would have us to be instructed, they are however, fundamental areas of knowledge so basic to our walk with Jesus Christ that God has warned us to be alert and fully

schooled in them so they may be incorporated into one's everyday lively faith.

*In Proverbs wisdom is personified as a wise and beautiful woman delivering wisdom and truth to those who might believe the simple truth. She announces that wisdom:*

*“has builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.*

*She has killed her beasts; she has mingled her wine; she also has furnished her table.*

*She has also sent forth her maidens: she cries upon the high places of the city,*

*whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she says to him,*

*‘Come and eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mingled.*

*Forsake the foolish, and live: and go in the way of understanding.” Prov. 9:1-6*

The seven pillars she alludes to are the seven pillars of knowledge revealed in the Epistles of the New Testament. The beasts she has killed are the sacrifices of her flesh and life offered to God in the way of deliverance from the worldly and carnal life. The wine she has mixed is the wine of the blood

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of Christ given as a sacrifice for her eternal life, the table she has set is that symbolic table of the Lord's Supper which is the love feast that represents her devotion to loving the Messiah who gave his life for her and for loving others the way he has loved her. She sends others in the same cause, 'maidens of Christ to be married to Him as His bride-to-be and invites others to come and learn and eat of this same life. This is the wisdom of the wise and beautiful Bride of Christ.

She makes up the pillars of the house and true believers are likened to "*living stones*" (through faith in Christ), that make up the building that is God's spiritual home. "*Ye also as lively stones, are built up to a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.*" Peter 2:5 The pillars of knowledge are the backbone of our spiritual house upon which our faith and understanding of God's will must securely rest. The seven pillars of knowledge are:

- 1.) The True Nature of Salvation 1 Cor. 10.1
- 2.) The Jews: God's Chosen People Rom. 11.25
- 3.) Fellowship: The Sharing of Fruit Rom. 1.13
- 4.) Gifts of the Spirit 1 Cor. 12
- 5.) Our Part of The Cross 2 Cor. 1.8
- 6.) Judgment 2 Peter 3.8
- 7.) The Rapture of the Bride 2 Thes. 4.13

These seven exhortations are worth our constant review. They are critical to sound doctrine and a clear understanding of God's plan for the house (we, His church) which He has built for His habitation. Truly they are the seven pillars of knowledge for the Church, which wisdom has hewn out and positioned securely in the framework of our spiritual building.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared, "*this is that which the prophet Joel prophesied*". Acts 2:16 The Holy Ghost had fallen on the multitudes and they had spoken in other tongues. The old men dreamed dreams, the young men saw visions, and the young women prophesied. But Pentecost was only the start. Joel spoke of the two rainstorms, the former and latter rains and the restoration of all things. The day of Pentecost was the former rain. Today's revival is the latter rain and now the fruits of God's fertile rain are ripening and bursting forth. Wisdom "*hath builded her house*" and the knowledge of Christ's principle doctrines has restored many things and made the Church strong again. Wisdom "*hath hewn out her seven pillars*"!

Consider the pillars if you have not already done so. Review them. Believe God's Word about them. Take serious the announcement made by the Spirit in those seven scriptures where He has said, "*I would*



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*not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning...*. God is asking each member of his household – and remember we are the lively stones built up to a spiritual house – to get their pillars firmly fixed and situated in their active faith so they then can move on to higher ground.

*“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.*

*Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

*And this we will do, if God permit.” Hebrews 6.1-3*

As Jesus declared to the religious leaders, *“Wisdom is justified of her children.”* We are not only wisdom’s children if we follow Christ but we are the house which wisdom built. Be wise. Do not be ignorant. Check out these seven pillars so you can go on to perfection!



# #1 THE TRUE NATURE OF SALVATION

Growing up in the Episcopal Church I was surrounded by regular church goers, sincere in their belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. We were all baptized into church membership; we all shared the liturgy; we all fellowshiped together; we all kissed the bishop's ring upon our confirmation, did good works, and worshipped together. But with us, I now know, "*God was not well pleased*".

Unfortunately, none of us had a real scriptural clue about real salvation or what it takes to live a life pleasing to God. The result of our ignorance was gross blindness about God's ways and, as a result, we were perpetual sinners. The fruit of our lives, which is the undeniable proof of faith, was not the fruits of the Spirit, as they must be for those who claim to follow Christ, but instead they were the fruits of the flesh, and they were in evident abundance. Lyings,

stealings, backbitings, hatred, and all sorts of lusts of the flesh, such as adultery and greed were common works. Instead of being Christians in word *and deed*, our faith was dead. We were Christians in word only. As our Lord's brother, James 2:26, said in his epistle, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" And brother, me and my fellow worshippers were dead – dead as doornails. The hypocrisy I saw within those beautiful but dead walls of stone drove me to cynicism about Christ and eventually to a loss of faith in God altogether. But God, in spite of the confusion and darkness of the religion of my youth, brought me to the light and gave me a saving knowledge of His Son, and to God's glory I have been reaping the benefits of salvation ever since.

It did not take long after I was born again to realize that many Christians (even truly born-again Christians) are of the same ilk as the Episcopalians of my youth. They say they are Christians, but they live like the Devil. They think that just because they are Christians by some commitment or experience and because they continue to rub elbows with true Christians, they will be saved by their association with the "Church". We born-again Christians should know better, but do we? It is not enough to be a Christian by label or word only. Simply answering

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an altar call is not the end-all either. We must put away sin in our life and live in obedience.

Paul, speaking to the body of believers at Corinth, a church which allowed sins to intermingle among their fellowship and worship, warns us all in I Cor. 10:12 saying, “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”. There is no such thing as eternal security. God will never take away our free will. As Peter says in his second epistle to the faithful believers in Christ, we must do the will of God to make our election sure. A man must repent, accept Jesus and be born again, but he must learn obedience and how to walk humbly in the love of God. One of the seven pillars of knowledge (all seven are antidotes administered by the Holy Ghost to inoculate us against ignorance) is this:

*“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;*

*And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*

*And did all eat the same spiritual meat;*

*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

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*But with many of them God was not well pleased:  
for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” I Cor.*

10:1-5

God is pointing out to His people that it is not enough to be with Christians, to just be around when His Spirit moves or heals somebody, or even to eat and drink of the same spiritual food and drink. Paul openly says that the things which happened to Israel in the wilderness were written as warnings for us. *“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”* verse 6

## WARNING NOT TO MURMUR AGAINST GOD

Righteousness and faith do not rub off on us just because we associate with Christ’s people. Let me say it again, righteousness and faith do not rub off on us just because we associate with God’s people. This scriptural pillar of church knowledge from I Corinthians continues on by noting that the faithless Israelites had fallen into four sins, all of which are common seductions to those called to a life of faith.

1.) Some had committed idolatry.

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- 2.) Some had committed fornication.
- 3.) Some had tempted God.
- 4.) Some had murmured (complained) against Him.

They had gone a whoring after other gods, they had fallen into lusts of the flesh, had accused God of evil intentions against them, and had complained that He didn't know how to take care of them properly. All these and more are the sins which easily can and have beset latter day Christians that have not only been part of the traditional churches but those who have experienced the revival of true worship and doctrines of the Holy Ghost since the 1960's to date. Think about it. How often have we heard about these sins, seen these sins, even known Christians who continually flirt or commit these sins. Scandals fill the news it seems regularly about spirit-filled and bible-based churches and pastors. They are disgraces of which the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost never have and never will approve. They are roadblocks along the Road to the Church of Philadelphia.

Paul repeats the earlier warning: *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall".* 1 Cor. 10:11-12 This passage, this exhortation to knowledge, this plea to

“not be ignorant” is not a threat, and Christians should not take it as a threat from God. Those with a dogmatic view of the Scriptures may argue about God’s intent here, but Paul states that this passage is simply a word to the wise when, a few verses later in verse 15, he says, *“I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say”*.

### JOSHUA’S MOUNTAIN PASS OF CHOICE

As the things in I Corinthians 10 were written for examples to us, so God had Israel act out the simple choice he gives us concerning hearing his voice and obeying it, rather than doing the natural thing and opting to do our own thing instead.

Just after entering the promised land, Joshua (who had been instructed by Moses, who had been instructed by God), had all of Israel walk through the small mountain pass between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. As they funnelled down through the narrow way, God told Joshua to take the leaders of the 12 tribes and split them into two halves. The leaders of six tribes were to stand on the slopes of Mt. Ebal and the leaders of the other six tribes took up their places on the side of Mt. Gerizim. As the people of Israel marched through the narrow mountain pass Joshua read all of the laws and



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statutes that Moses had written down (Deuteronomy) so that everyone could hear them. The leaders on the side of Mt. Gerizim then read a list of blessings which God promised to give Israel if they would be obedient to His voice and follow everything that was commanded of them that day. The leaders on the other side of the narrow strait, on the side of Mt. Ebal, then pronounced the curses that would befall Israel if they were rebellious and refused to listen to God's voice. Deut. 27

What a majestic sight! What a wonderful moment it must have been in the history of Israel to be moving into the Promised Land and have the simplicity of Christ laid so perfectly before them. The way before them was straight and narrow, the blessings for obedience to His voice simple and clear. The penalty for ignoring His voice and loving commands made obvious. What electricity must have been in that ravine! What Holy Ghost goosebumps must have come upon all the people. (Joshua 8) Like those who passed between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim we come to Christ and we are called to walk the straight and narrow path. Jesus told this parable about people who hang around and partake of God's things and never really repent of their rebellion or of doing their own thing.

*“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

*When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:*

*Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*

*But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” Lk 13:24-27*

If we do the works of the flesh we are none of His. We should not kid ourselves about this dangerous state we are in. People do not prove their love for the Lord by words only, they prove it in word and deed. Just because we come to Christ, it is not a given that we will do His will or flee the world and its sin. In another parable Jesus said, *“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the Father which is in heaven.”* Matt 7:21 He concludes the parable by telling people that those who hear His sayings are like those who build their house on solid ground

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and those who hear and ignore are like those who have no foundation for their house and will someday come to ruin with a great crash.

Paul says of himself, what a shame it would be if he brought so many to salvation but he himself became a castaway. Why would he say this unless it were a possibility, no matter how remote? If he, the model in New Testament scripture for us, can say this, then we should also monitor our own hearts as he did his own. The truth of salvation is that those who do the will of the Father are saved and not those who simply say “Lord, Lord”.

The apostle John put it this way in his first epistle: *“But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.”* 1 John 2:6 Brothers and sisters in Christ, all of us equal before God, let us take heed how we walk and thereby make our election sure.



## #2 THE JEWS: GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.*

*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*

*For this is my covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins.*

*As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes but as touching the election, they are the beloved for the fathers' sakes.” Romans 11:25-28*

God has clearly warned the Church not to think of herself more than she should, that blindness came to the Jews so there could be a time of salvation for

the whole world. This “suspension” of time for the Gentile’s sakes has a prescribed end. In due course the Jews will be saved. Yet in its dark ignorance, the Church has often forgotten this truth and ignored the promise to the Jews who are the seed of Abraham. Over the last thousand years the Church has belittled, accused, persecuted and even killed the Jews. Christianity as a whole has condoned their hatred of the Jews by believing that it was the Jews who killed Jesus and that because of that God has cast them adrift forever. The Church has used this rationale to feed its self-righteous attitude and to excuse persecution of the Jews. But no matter how or why this attitude and spirit has prevailed it has been one of deep ignorance and is scripturally wrong.

The Jews were no more or no less responsible for the death of Christ than the Gentile world, and the Gentiles were no less responsible than the Jews. Let this truth be established in your heart and mind, as Jesus said;

*“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.*

*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” John 10:17-18*

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Jesus *surrendered* his life for our (Jew and Gentile) sakes. Those involved in making the trap for Jesus are still guilty, however. Remember, it was not only the Jews (with their trumped up charges) that bear the blame, but ROME (representing us Gentiles) approved the execution and it was the Gentile soldiers who mocked and scourged Jesus, placed the crown of thorns on His head, made Him carry the cross up Golgotha, and pierced Him in His side. Yes, we all bear responsibility for hating and crucifying God. It was a conspiracy of all mankind.

That the Jews shoulder sole responsibility for the death of Jesus is the first great misconception the Church has carried against the nation Israel and it inevitably leads to a very serious mistake. Wherever this ignorance persists it is believed that the Jews have been cast off forever by God. Romans chapter 9, 10 and 11 should be studied carefully by every Christian and taken to heart. It establishes who we are and who the Jews are in the face of God's plan of redemption.

*"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.*

*Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and*

*the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles;  
how much more their fullness? ...*

*For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy:  
and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

*And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou  
being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them,  
and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the  
olive tree;*

*Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast,  
thou bearest not the root but the root thee.*

*Thou wilt say then, The Branches were broken off,  
that I might be grafted in.*

*Well; because of unbelief they were broken off and  
thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear:*

*For if God spared not the natural branches, take  
heed lest he also spare not thee.” Rom. 11:11-12, 16-21*

As the prophecy says, all Israel shall be saved. The time of the Gentiles shall come to an end just as God has declared. The Church had forgotten these basic promises and God’s sure word of prophecy. Becoming wise in her own conceits and puffed up in the spiritual pride of the blessings which God had bestowed upon her she became ignorant and injurious. But, glory to God, the Holy Ghost has lifted this condition.



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The knowledge about the nation of Israel and its election has been restored to the Church in our lifetime. In every denomination and group the truth about the chosen nation has come to light. The establishment of a Jewish state in Israel in 1948 and the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the denominations during the sixties and seventies has forced the Christian believer to look at the Jews with greater compassion. Churches everywhere have decided to support the Jewish cause and to sing the praises of God's chosen nation. The Holy Ghost has confronted us with this marvelous truth and it is up to each individual believer to receive it in his or her heart. This does not mean the Jews are without fault or problem that merits our undaunted approval of everything they do in these last days.

To indiscriminately support the Jews in everything they do may have peculiar dangers lurking within that oblivious attitude. The wise must use keen discernment in all spiritual matters. The day is shortly coming when the Jews and lukewarm Christians will again be in league against God. They will not only be in consort with Antichrist's new world, the apostate Christians and Jews will conspire with the antichrist to set him up in the temple in Jerusalem as God Himself. To the Jews and Christians involved in that work we owe no loyalty.

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God will not require that His people support apostate Jews working for humanism even if they are of the chosen nation. We cannot give all Jewish causes and action *carte blanche* support.

*“(God) will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.*

*But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,*

*Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile:*

*But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:*

*For there is no respect of persons with God.” Rom. 2:6-11*

## HOW THEN SHOULD PHILADELPHIANS SUPPORT THE JEWS?

What then should we do? God wants us to acknowledge and help Israel doesn't he? Yes, we should defend the Jews and respect the fact that they are heirs to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob. We should rejoice in the fulfilling of prophecy and aid them in their spiritual fight against the antichrist spirit of the world; and we should promote the re-establishment of Israel in today's world because it is God's plan being manifested. We should be careful not to be influenced by the humanistic arguments that ever rage against the Jews in today's atmosphere of international power politics regardless of how logical or compelling they seem. Still, in another sense, all that is happening in Israel is none of the Church's business. If we are not to be deceived by events shortly to come to pass we must be wise as serpents but gentle as doves. Much of what we are witnessing in Israel today is a sort of family squabble. What is happening in the Middle East, with the violence, intrigue and jockeying for peace, is the fulfillment of end-time prophecy.

God's workings with the Jews, even to the Church, remains a mystery and a paradox: like a father chastising his son. Through the prophet, Micah, God announced that He has a controversy with his child.

*"Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." Mic. 6:2*

But through his prophet, Zechariah, God has also established Israel as his dear child, saying,

*“Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.*

*For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.” Zech. 2:7-8*

He loves the child but there is a breach between them, one that only the parties involved can resolve. The Church has as much insight into this controversy as a stranger, who passing by, sees a father chastening his child and has no perfect understanding what is really happening. I look forward with great anticipation to the day when the controversy that God has with the “apple of his eye” comes to its saving conclusion. What a day that will be, I am sure. As the scripture says,

*“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” Rom. 11:15*

We can only now guess at the full meaning of this scripture. Until then we ought to have compassion

on Israel and aid them in their battle against the antichrist spirit and the spirit of a world always ready to persecute them. I believe time will reveal that the born-again, Spirit-filled Christian walks a tight-rope of faith concerning the Jews and how to react to their plight. Therefore, I will not support those Jews who betray the calling of the nation Israel by compromising with the spirits of the antichrist and humanism. For the day is fast approaching, and has even started, when Jews in power will support and uphold the Antichrist in return for peace with the nations of the Gentiles. Just as this is now happening we can be sure that the days are rapidly approaching when the Jews and the Gentiles will conspire together, just as in the days of Christ's first coming, against the plan of God. This time, instead of trying to kill God, the conspirators will attempt to depose God and usurp His Lordship by worshipping the antichrist as he sits on the throne of God, in God's temple, in God's city. We can be certain this conspiracy will take place because it is written in the books of the prophets, in Daniel, and in Revelation. It will be a time of great evil and holocaust for the Jewish people and for all those who hold fast the testimony of Jesus.

The leaders who guide the world into the conspiracy of the antichrist, I will not follow, we should

not follow, nor am I required to follow. Isaiah heard and recorded these words over 2500 years ago but the Spirit now speaks them to the Church today:

*“For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,*

*Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom, this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.*

*Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*

*And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

*And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken”*

*Isa.8:11-15*

When we start to understand the nature of end-time prophecy it becomes apparent that the Christian must stand by and, in many ways, be content to watch the drama unfold, to watch the conspirators swarm together. But we must also be ready to help the afflicted Jews who refuse to be part of the

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“confederacy” that was prophesied so long ago. In the meantime, we should not look down on the Jews or be prejudiced against them, or proclaim the Gentile world as the chosen peoples of God. Instead, I will look for the fulfillment of prophecy, which includes the salvation of Israel, the judgment of the world, the redemption of the Church and, of course, the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds.





## #3 FELLOWSHIP: THE SHARING OF FRUIT

For many people, fellowship means going to church and listening to a sermon. To others it means gathering together around a table, sharing a meal, remembering good times and looking toward the future with a mix of desperation and hope. To Christians, fellowship ought to be something deeper, however, something more purposeful and fulfilling, a sharing of mutual benefit which will provide nourishment for the soul. The apostle Paul wrote the Romans exhorting them not to be ignorant about fellowship and told them of the great desire he had to exchange spiritual fruit with them.

*“For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

*Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that often times I purposed to come to you, (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.” Romans 1:11-13*

For centuries Christians more often than not came together ignorant of true fellowship and its spiritual purpose. They came together for every reason but to sharpen their personal relationship with Jesus and share the good fruit of God. Many church-goers still believe that any gathering under the Christian banner, for whatever purpose, is fellowship. They believe singing hymns, or receiving communion, or talking over coffee and donuts is fellowship; and in worldly terms that is the sum total of most fellowship. The common dictionary defines fellowship as camaraderie, but in God’s world that definition is far too shallow. A deeper look into the root of the Hebrew word reveals that sharing is synonymous with fellowship. Among the called out ones (the Church), fellowship means sharing the fruits of God. The exchange of the fruits of the Spirit (or fruits of righteousness as it is called in many places in the epistles) encourages us in God’s Word and helps to make it a reality in our daily lives.

SHARING AND WASHING ARE AT THE

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### HEART OF FELLOWSHIP

Any group or place that claims to provide fellowship will make it possible for the individual believer to share the fruits which God has grown in them. Saints will not be required to sit silently like wooden puppets in a row watching the back of one another's heads while one or two people do all the ministering and sharing. Further, any true fellowship will make it possible to test the fruits. Believers will be able to have the dust of the world washed from them by the comfort, encouragement and gentle admonitions of fellow saints. True fellowship will allow a saint to grow according to God's time-table. This requires getting to know one another, discussing things and being involved in one another's lives in a personal way. The spiritual fruits of patience and longsuffering will be evident so new, or less mature, believers can "catch up" with the older, wiser brethren. Immature brethren seeking deliverance and freedom will be allowed to confess their sins and faults openly in an atmosphere of love, thereby having their "feet washed" from the dirt that clings to them through unavoidable contact with the world. This circle of fellowship is the Philadelphian way. In Christ's name sin will be forgiven. In love and faith, while unruly and unlearned believers will

be taught, and even rebuked when necessary, to the end that they are delivered from their sins so that all things will be done decently and in order during gatherings and meetings. Body ministry, the type spoken of in I Corinthians 12 will be employed and practiced in the spirit.

Paul said he longed to have fellowship with the Romans. It was in this manner he hoped to have it. To Paul that meant imparting spiritual gifts to them, encouraging their faith and sharing spiritual fruit with them. It meant getting to know them in their home life, their real life, getting to know who and what they were. Paul, being wise in the Lord, knew that all of his knowledge, all of his freedom and all of the gifts of the Spirit were useless unless they produced fruits for God's use. He also knew full well that where there is no sharing and detection of fruit, all of the fellowship, or rather presumed fellowship, is in vain. Anyway, if no good fruit is growing in our personal lives then we have nothing worthwhile to share when we come together as believers. Our fellowshiping, no matter how impressive the music and the worship, is, in a manner of speaking, fruitless.

Jesus taught His disciples to beware fancy talk and hypocrisy. He warned them about watching for fruits. He said, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to*

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*you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."* Matt 7:15-16 Paul gave the Church at Galatia an outline of what God says are good fruits and what are bad fruits. Any person even approaching honesty with self admits in their heart that at points during their life they have been well acquainted with what the Bible identifies as '*works of the flesh*'. On the other hand, the nature of the fruits of the Spirit are mysterious, no better than rumors to the unconverted heart. It is the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit that reveals them after one has been born again. The list in Galatians is a summary of the fruits, but only a summary. To that list we might add things like honesty, patience, humility, and kindness also.

*"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,*

*Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

*Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which sow such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,*

TERRY SMITH

*longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

*Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

*If we live in the Spirit let us walk in the Spirit."*

*Gal.5:19-25*

## WE MUST LEARN THE FRUITS BEFORE WE CAN DETECT THEM

Learning and detecting the fruits is not something we can treat like Psychology 101. They are much more than a list just to be memorized. Knowing what the fruits are is one thing; knowing what they really mean and how they affect our lives is another. Worldly ideas about such things as love, joy, peace, etc., are quite different from God's truth about them. We may be very happy that we made a dishonest buck, but is that the joy of the Lord? We might find peace by compromising the truth or someone else's interest, but is that spiritual peace? The greatest example is in the greatest fruit of all, love. It has been said, love is never having to say you're sorry. That's garbage. It is not love to allow people to have their own way regardless of their treatment of others, or to simply give them anything they want. That's

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deadly. Nor is love indiscriminate unity, as ecumenism teaches; look what a unified Germany did in World War II. Nor is love to be confused with reconciling sin to Christ; Christ came to destroy sin. God and sin will never be brought together, never be reconciled. Instead, love is a mixture of truth and mercy, as the pair so often appears side by side in Psalms. God's love never ignores the truth, but rejoices in it, and yet it mixes compassion with truth in a way that works salvation and righteous judgment at the same time. God's love is a miracle; it is beyond our highest thoughts. It is Jesus hanging on the cross, the truth about our condition, and God's wonderful mercy compressed into one enormous act of love. Love is embodied in a person. Love is Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, it is not enough to know the words or throw around Christian platitudes concerning fruit. The Church must know how to detect them if they are to benefit by the sharing of them. We must not settle for a basket of pretty looking plastic fruit. Do not settle for anything but the real thing. If we are to be nourished by the fruits then we must detect the real thing first in our own lives and spirit, and then look for them in those around us. We must not be ignorant about the fruits and that true fellowship is about the sharing of those fruits so everyone can be mutually nourished. Paul

wrote to his friend and fellow soldier in Christ, Timothy, about the realities of fellowship.

*“And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.*

*If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.*

*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:19-22*

Fellowshipping among the saints, partaking of the good fruit of God, one with another, is one of the greatest joys of the Church and its believers. The God-given purpose for the gifts of the Spirit is to produce fruit for God’s use. As the parable of the sower of the seeds shows: some hear God and immediately forget about it; some do God’s bidding for a short while but persecution scares them off, some grow but get choked by the cares of the world and never bring fruit to perfection; and some, with patience, slowly, just the same as the fruits of nature grow, bring forth spiritual fruit for other saints to be



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nourished by and comforted. If we have love (and the other fruits) then we will have something to share when we come together with other saints.



## #4 THE GIFTS: GIVEN BY THE SPIRIT

Few things, during the revival of our times, has stirred more controversy than the rekindling of the spiritual gifts. Citing both real and imagined abuses, some have preached against the gifts of the Spirit; others have dismissed them as emotional superstition; and still others have gone so far as to say they are out and out Satanic. No matter the objections, God desires to give us gifts. First and foremost, will always be the gift of His Son and the work Jesus did on Calvary. But close behind the gift of the 'cross' are the gift of the active presence of the Holy Ghost within us and His spiritual gifts given in order to help and mature the body of Christ. Whatever the abuses (and there have been abuses), or whatever the fine religious arguments fashioned to oppose the free-flow of the gifts in the Church, one thing remains sure in God's Word: We are told not to be

ignorant of the gifts. The twelfth chapter of I Corinthians vs 1-11 is explicit:

*“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant...*

*Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit.*

*And there are differences of the administrations, but the same Lord.*

*And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all.*

*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

*For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

*To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

*To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues;*

*But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” I Cor 12,*

*1-11*

If we refuse the gifts of the Holy Ghost we will

remain ignorant, not only in this crucial area, which is meant to help in our walk, but in other areas of our Christian life as well. Throughout the Age of the Church the Christian world has maligned the Jews for rejecting Christ, the one whom God had sent; and at the same time we have been horribly guilty of rejecting the Holy Spirit, the one whom Jesus sent. What sort of hypocrisy do we engage in when we judge the Jews for rejecting Christ and turn around and reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Ghost is the Comforter, the Teacher, the Judge; He is the one sent of Jesus to lead the Church into all truth. Yet we have preferred to lead ourselves. Regardless, Christ's words are no less true today than they were the moment He first spoke them to his disciples at the Last Supper.

*“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he hears, that shall he speak and he will show you things to come.*

*He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” John 16:13-14*

There can be no question: the single greatest factor in the lifting of church apostasy has been the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on our generation. All of

the various types of churches , Ephesian, Smyrnan, Pergamos, Thyatiran, Sardisian and Laodicean (and their myriad offspring types- have been visited by the Spirit of God from time to time over the two thousand years of church history, but none have accepted the Spirit of Christ as Philadelphia has with full submission and reverential trust and faithfulness.

The gifts are given to help believers enter into the resurrected life. The gift of wisdom is given to the Church to help her in situations that are impossible to cope with by human means. The gift of knowledge is given to enlighten the Church in time of special need; supernatural faith is given to accomplish the impossible; healings are brought forth to aid salvation's work; miracles are performed to witness to the Gospel; discerning of spirits is given to protect and deliver the Church; and prophecies come forth to edify the believer and give praise to the Lord Jesus. These and other gifts are bestowed on the Church as the Spirit wills, in the manner the Spirit wills.

DO NOT LET ABUSES STOP YOU FROM  
RECEIVING GIFTS

Some churches have fallen into the mistake of

thinking there is a set pattern which the Holy Ghost uses in bringing forth the gifts. There is, however, neither a pattern nor a single way in which the gifts are administered. As the Scriptures plainly say there are differences in the way gifts are administered and a diversity of ways in which they operate. I Cor. 12 But they are not for entertainment either. In some places the gifts have been exploited as entertainment, like they were dancing with the stars. Most egregious was the allowance of orthodox churches and some charismatic groups wrongly inviting people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit never considering whether the person had even been born again. The foolish tradition of infant water baptism substituting for the actual born-again experience making this a hideous mistake and not just a harmless oversight. A person can never become born-again thinking all the while that they have been. The consequences not only could be, they are deadly. Other consequences of abusing the gifts are the seduction of choosing power over love. Preferring power, spiritual avarice has made people forget their first love – Jesus, seeking the gifts above hearing the voice of God and being obedient to it they forget Christ.

It is imperative, however brethren, that you do not allow these abuses to deter you from receiving the

blessings that the gifts of the Holy Ghost provide. If abuses were an excuse for discarding the truth then the whole world would only need to cite the abuses perpetrated by “Christianity” in the name of Christ as an excuse for rejecting Jesus. There are no excuses for rejecting God’s gifts, and if we do we shall remain ignorant and weak, without the being armed with the power we need to combat the enemies of Self, World and Satan that can undo us without the help of God being poured out upon us.

In preaching to the Corinthian church, a church that had been abusing the gifts, Paul first warned them to do things in order, but still used words like “*desire*” and “*earnestly covet*” to teach them to want the gifts. A word to the wise. Often, if not always, the controversy over the gifts settles on the gift of tongues. Relying on their intellect, Christians become embarrassed by the gift of tongues; to them the gift of tongues is absurd, or foolish, or even demonic. Ignorant men say that God gave it to the Church, but doesn’t any more, and now only Satan has it and uses it to mock God. If what they say is true then God gave a gift to his Church, took it away, let Satan have control of it, and now allows His Church to be tossed round and round in total confusion. It is clear from the full context of I Corinthians (especially chapters 12 & 14) that Paul



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and the Holy Ghost agree: tongues is a purposeful and valid gift of the Spirit. Any honest searcher of the Scriptures will come to know that tongues are very closely associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is, in its prayer form and not its prophetic form, the confirmation to the believer that he is immersed in the Holy Ghost by faith. Paul ended his teaching on the gifts and speaking in tongues to the Corinthians with this: "*Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophecy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.*" I Cor. 14:39

### HOW DO THE GIFTS COME FORTH?

The gifts will be given to us and administered to us by dream, or vision, or a still small voice, but when and how the gifts come forth is often up to the discretion of the vessel receiving them. "*The spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*" I Cor. 14:32 This means that the recipient of a gift will have to initiate the operation of the gift. The feeling to bring forth the gift may be so intense that the person feels like they will explode if they do not get it out. Or, it may be just a gentle prodding of the Spirit. People often think they have to be put into some kind of spiritual trance before they can bring forth a gift of the Spirit. Not true. Not all times are proper, but when the time

is right I have to act by faith and let the gift flow. “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*” 1 COR 14:40

What then do the various gifts of the Spirit have in common? If it is not in the way they are administered, or how they are given, or in their operation, what, then, makes the gifts true gifts from God? The test of the gifts is not in their glamour or even in their miraculous nature. Satan can, and will, perform miracles of his own. The proof of the gifts lies in, to whom and to what they testify. The single common thread running through all the gifts of the Spirit is that they edify the Church while they sing the praises of Jesus Christ. If the gifts are not to be abused, then the recipients and the beneficiaries must test them with all diligence. Dreams, visions, prophecies, and all profound words, must be tested. They must conform to the Good News. The operation and administration of the gifts may vary, but the one thing which will never vary is their Gospel truth. The Holy Spirit praises Christ and never lies or blasphemes about God in any way.

To have gifts flowing in our church increases our responsibility as believers, for it means added responsibility in testing their truth, and that means we must be knowledgeable in all areas of the Gospel, especially where the Holy Spirit has told us to beware and to “*not be ignorant*”. We must know God’s

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Word in order to hold the gifts up to the proper scrutiny. We cannot rely on a pastor or leader to know God's Word for us. The gifts mean added responsibility. We must be able to detect which spirit is speaking, whether it is the good Spirit of God or the wandering, fallen spirits of Satan. And for that we need to be of good understanding. We must not be ignorant, brethren.



## #5 TAKING UP OUR PART OF THE CROSS

*“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:*

*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:” 2 Corinthians 1:8-9*

Many churches and preachers preach the message of the cross. They preach that Christ left His glory in heaven, shed His blood for us, died on the cross, was buried, and rose again to sit at the Father’s right hand, so we, sinful mankind, could be saved. And we, as Paul did, praise God for anyone and everyone who preaches the Good News. But that is only the

beginning of the truth about death and life, only the first half of the message of the cross.

Oh! Don't get the wrong impression! Christ did it all on Calvary. There are no other and will be no other sacrifices needed to redeem man out of the deadly grip of sin. Jesus is the once and for all Lamb of God. He is the beginning and the end; the Alpha and Omega; our father, brother, sister, mother. Still, we must pick up our own cross and follow after Him.

Like Paul, we must succumb to the Spirit. We must live in the Spirit and "kill" our flesh. That mystical, but very real, "*sentence of death*" should be active and working in the life of any true disciple of Christ. Desires and ambitions anchored in this present world should give way to hope in the Gospel and the life that is to come. Hope for a continuing better world built on the sandy delusions of humanism should be shattered to pieces by faith in God's prophetic word. Disciples who are buried with Christ will also be resurrected into new life, a life of love and power that the world cannot know. The Bible frankly advises the Church "*to not be ignorant*" concerning the wonderful power of the resurrected life. By dying to self Paul could honestly say, "*For when I am weak then am I strong.*", 2 Cor 12:10 and also, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*" Phl 4:13 The way to this kind of supernatural

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strength, unknown entirely to the ways of man, is to pick up our own cross and follow Jesus to our very own, personal death.

### EVERYBODY WANTS TO GO TO HEAVEN BUT NOBODY WANTS TO DIE

This, however, is not a popular stand to take. Getting people excited about healing and miracles is much easier and more acceptable by far. Insisting on spiritual death is a hard thing, as a gospel song says, “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” Everybody wants the power of Jesus Christ to be active in their life, but very few are willing to give up everything in order to have it be a reality and the prominent force during their entire day. Christians often prefer to wallow in their own excuses for sin while searching for some hidden door that will lead them on some easy, self-gratifying way to spiritual perfection. The fulfilling of sacraments, giving of tithes, going to church, making confession, doing penance, good works, memorization of Scripture, and witnessing can all be neat little ways to think we are appeasing God’s will; when in reality we are avoiding the nitty-gritty of the cross.

The flesh is unable to obtain to the power of Jesus

Christ. Paul told the Galatians (a church fallen into the snare of thinking they could live righteous lives by following rules and laws), *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* Gal 2:20 Paul had crucified his flesh so that the righteous one, Jesus Christ, could live through him.

BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN? HOW DOES  
ONE  
DIE TO SELF? HOW DOES ONE CRUCIFY  
SELF?

It is done through prayer and belief. Dying to self means yielding to the Holy Spirit. It means being obedient not just in word but in action. It means seeking the truth rather than our own selves, even to our own hurt. The prophet Micah asked this question over two millennia ago, *“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* Micah 6:6-7



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*And God gives Micah the answer...*

*“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” vs 8*

If that were the case under the law, how much more does it apply under grace? Infinitely more! But the believer cannot hope to have the fruits of love and justice brought about through a humble walk unless he has died in the spirit. Why else would Jesus have taught things like:

*“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

*He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”... Matt 10:38-39*

And this parable:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

TERRY SMITH

*If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” John 12:24-26*

Jesus taught about our part of the cross because it is a spiritual necessity for the Christian walk and to ignore it is to walk a fruitless walk. We are told fruitless branches are thrown on the fire because they have no other use. What seems to be a mysterious and frightening path – because no one wants to die – is actually the true garden path. If we believe by faith that the power of the Holy Spirit can bring about our spiritual death whereby the deeds of the flesh can be mortified and we can be resurrected into a life of victory; then it will happen for us.

Many Christians through this Age of Grace have lived the following scripture in such a way that they could testify in truth to its reality. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Col 3:1-3* Only by believing in the power of dying to self does this great passage of the Bible have any substantive meaning:

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them*

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*which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

TERRY SMITH

*But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:1-14*

There is no other way to attain the righteousness of God than through the crucifixion of our own flesh by the spirit. There is no short cut. If you can hear this message, then by faith pray to God that He gives you the grace to die to your plans and your will, so you can live to His. I assure you God will smile on your prayer and will begin engineering your glorious demise in His own time, in His own merciful and compassionate way.

# #6 FAST APPROACHING: JUDGMENT DAY

The Philadelphian will recognize and keep in the forefront of their mind that the Day of Judgment is coming like a freight train, descending fast upon all the continents, exploding in fulfillment within all the paradigms of biblical end-times prophecy. These are perilous times, every branch of society is breaking down. Let the mocking and stupid apocryphal movies and TV series continue with their asinine scripts and fanciful productions of endless fairy tale rumor. Let the scoffing co-worker, the doubting religious stiff and the ambitious political leaders continue to walk in dark hopes of making the world a utopia by oppressing mankind and robbing it of all liberty and freedom, just as the Antichrist will ultimately do. The day of judgment draws nearer with each breath. God has promised that His only Son will return with armies of saints

from heaven to purge the earth of corruption, injustice, and sin and to lead a holy and just rule upon earth.

Those who know and believe the words of the Bible take to heart this passage which Peter wrote telling fellow Christians not to be ignorant of coming judgment.

*“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 2 Peter 3:7-10*

The Holy Ghost has taught The Church in these

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past 40 years and continues to bear witness in our hearts that the judgment of the world is necessary if God's promise of a righteous rule of Christ on earth is to be fulfilled. If heaven and earth are not purged then the new heaven and new earth promised in the last two chapters of the Bible would have no chance to exist. The Scriptures are explicit, the world is going to be burned up in fiery judgment. Revelation tells the story. Peter prophesied in His second epistle:

*"... that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*

*And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

*For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:*

*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:3-7*

The world and its faithful followers believe that their

governments, institutions and glorious ideas will all last forever. And though there is no reconciling the Spirit of God with the spirit of the world, many Christians have figured that God wants to save the “world”. But James declares: “... *know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*”  
James 4:4

John exhorted the Church in this fashion.

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,*

*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”* 1

*John 2:15-17*

We can be sure that if the world is going to pass away then those who love the things of the world will also pass away.



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### A FIERY JUDGMENT IS COMING TO THE EARTH

Christ first came in meekness, lowly, riding a colt, not a warhorse, and gave Himself into the hands of the world so that some would receive salvation, but that will not be His mission at His second coming. He will return with fire in His eyes and a sword of judgment in His mouth. An unusual way to express His appearance if it were not so spiritually perfect. Christ will burn everything that cannot stand up to the gaze of God and will cut to ribbons anything that does not measure up to His word. The world will melt and tremble at His presence. According to the prophecies written in Revelation, Christ and His saints (all true and faithful believers) will begin a thousand year reign, ruling with a rod of iron.

As the day of God's furious judgment draws nearer and nearer the prophetic echoes ring louder and louder round the world. Crime, corruption, sexual perversion, hypocrisy in government, apostate religion, and lusts of all sort grow rampant. False teachers and prophets are celebrated while they bilk the sheep of not only money but their very faith in God. Lying spirits are working every kind of deceit inside and outside the confines of every variety of church of Christ. No one sitting in

churches is being held accountable for righteousness according to scripture. Not even judgments like AIDS, Ebola, wars and commotions, financial and economic ruin, the widening of the gap between the very few rich and the enormous rate of the poor and the annihilation of the middle classes can convince people to do the right thing and admit that the end is coming and God will judge such unrighteousness. The cup of iniquity is filling while the signs of the time are shining brighter and brighter in every news story on our I Phones and on TV news broadcast. As prophesied in 1 & 2 Timothy, seducing spirits are selling the doctrines of devils. Sin is said to be good; doing your own thing is righteous. Psychiatrists teach us that to combat the evils done to us by the world that we should do things to love ourselves, denying that we should love God first and foremost. Indeed we live in the perilous times of the last days. Everything points to the soon return of Jesus.

Two thousand years (equivalent to just two days on the Lord's heavenly calendar) have passed since Jesus departed to be with the Father and it is very, very likely that Jesus will reappear on the dawn of the "third day", just as he was resurrected on the dawn of the third day after His crucifixion. To escape the judgment that is coming upon all the earth, members of the Body of Christ must be

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willing and ready to receive judgment now, not only in their personal lives but in their hearts as well.

There is no escape from God's judgment, nor should there be. Sacraments, tithing, good works; none of these can be a substitute for finding life through a personal relationship with the resurrected Jesus Christ, nor can they serve as a replacement for what can only be accomplished by an obedient life of love in Christ. We must all some day face our maker. Either we can submit to His merciful and delivering judgment and let it produce love and freedom in us, or we can stubbornly hold out and fall victim to His terrible judgment. *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*, as it says in Hebrews 10:31. Instead we are taught, *"if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged, but when we are chastened we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be judged with the world."* I Cor 11:31-32

Many aspects of our walk involve a process of being delivered from evil into living and walking in the goodness of Jesus Christ, of being brought from darkness into light; departing and fleeing and being changed into His likeness. If those things are to happen to us we must invite the judgment of the Holy Ghost. His judgment must win out over ours. Without accepting God's judgment in our walk we

will remain in the world no matter how godly or pious we might appear to others.

*“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

*Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” 2 Peter 3:11-14*

This is the only way to be spared the fiery judgment coming on the earth. If we live spotless and blameless lives for Christ, a spiritual perfection before Christ, then we can look forward to the judgment of the world and the second coming without fear. We can hope in the rapture, which will likely come before the great tribulation that is to come on all the world according to Revelation 3:10. To use the words of Peter, we can make our calling and election

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sure. 2 Peter 1:10 This perfection spoken of is not a carnal or intellectual perfection. It does not mean we will never make a wrong judgment or a mistake. It is a perfection achieved by obedience of faith. It can be detected by the faithful eyes of other disciples of Christ because the fruit of our actions is the evidence of our obedience. Our perfection hinges entirely on hearing the Word of God and doing it. It is important here to realize, however, that God does not want us to fear His judgment; in fact He wants us to invite it. Beautifully, this passage of Peter's which exhorts us to not be ignorant, this pillar of knowledge in the Church, is the only one of the seven pillars which is addressed to the "beloved" instead of simply, the "brethren". Being addressed to the beloved reassures the faithful that God's love is with them always – even in judgment. For it is for our sakes that the world will be judged.



## #7 THE RAPTURE: THE BRIDE WAITS

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

*Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the*

*Lord.*

*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1*

*Thess 4:13-18*

Comfort one another with these words. How often are we comforted with the words of the rapture in our fellowship? The resurrection, whether of the dead or living, is the hope of the Church. It is the reward of our labor of faith and without a living faith for the rapture, without the constant nourishment it provides for our souls, we will suffer from spiritual malnutrition. The resurrection is the glorious moment in the battle of our salvation. If the goal – if the end of our discipline and trials – becomes vague and obscure, then our whole walk can become muddled.

Ignorance in these last hours of the Church Age can and will make us a lazy, sleeping, carnal body of misdirected believers. Historically, the Church has been so busy building a kingdom here on earth, or meddling in the politics of the nations that it has had little interest in the “vague and distant fables” about the rapture. But a new day has dawned in the Church. The Holy Ghost has renewed a spirit of faith about the resurrection of the living and given her faith for God’s promise that He will lift all faithful believers out of impending world tribulation.



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The Church has been informed by the Spirit that the time for the rapture looms closer and closer with each tick of the clock.

The revival of the '60's and 70's opened every denomination's eyes to the signs of the time. Now, one fulfilled prophecy is following fast on the heels of another. Prophetic scholars all agree; the signs of the end-time are appearing and flashing like huge neon signs on the horizon of time, changing color and graphics as each prophecy is newly fulfilled.

### SIGNS OF CHRIST'S RETURN

Jesus told His disciples to behold the fig tree, and all the trees, that when they begin to bud it would be time to look up, for our redemption would be drawing near. The fig tree represents Israel, the other trees represent the nations of the world. It is not a coincidence that just after Israel, once again, budded into a nation in 1948 after more than 2,000 years of lying dormant, that many of the ancient biblical powers also returned as forces on the world scene. Egypt, Iraq (Babylon), Iran (Persia), Syria, Libya and Ethiopia have all, for various reasons, reclaimed important positions in the affairs of the nations of the world, and all within the last two decades. These countries which were all but laughed at in elementa-

ry geography books a generation ago, are now forces to be reckoned with, and it is a miracle.

Another beacon blinking on and off almost every day is the warning given by Jesus on the Mount of Olives. Jesus promised that the end would be preceded by wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes in divers places. Hardly a news day goes by when one of those things cannot be reported. On the day of this writing war was being rumored in Bosnia, and two violent earthquakes, killing hundreds of people, hit along the Pacific rim. Post-colonial Africa has been the scene of millions of murders and deaths with constant tumults and unceasing commotions, rebellions, coups and genocides.

Along with these signs shine the brilliantly bright prophecies of Daniel serving as a tremendous warning of the nearness of the rapture. Daniel was told that the meaning of his prophecies would be hidden away until the time of the end when travel and knowledge would be vastly increased. Today we can understand Daniel's prophecies in the light of history and current events. Our understanding of Daniel is partly due to the fact that we live in a world that has increased its knowledge a million-fold in this century alone. We live in a "global village" shrunken to miniature size by TV, computers, jets,

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satellites and automobiles. The Book of Daniel is, in and of itself, a sign of the end-times and the impending rapture. Every Christian who reads and understands the book of Daniel will be blessed by having their faith for Christ's return bolstered.

The New Testament's forewarning of the believer about the spiritual condition of people in the last days is yet another sign. Ask yourself if the following passage of Scripture does not describe an all too familiar world.

*“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

*For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

*Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

*Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;*

*Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” 2 Tim 3:1-5*

A good and accurate description of the workplace and society in general, don't you think? Other signs of the end include the formation of the European

Community (which is headed toward a powerful and unified Europe), the rise of ecumenism in religion, the taking of Jerusalem by the Jews in 1967, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the prophecy of Joel concerning the former and latter day rain.

#### EXACT HOUR OF RAPTURE NOT KNOWN

It is clear; Christ is getting ready to receive his bride. The exact hour of the rapture is a secret known only to the Father Himself, but the words of Jesus tell us that we can know the general time and season by discerning the signs of the day. He gave us signs to look for and warned us to be ready and watching, lest that day come on us like a thief. Ask yourself this. If we could not know the time why else would Christ have scolded the religious leaders of Israel for knowing how to read the signs in the skies so they could determine the coming weather while they ignored the spiritual signs of their day that foretold of Jesus' first coming?

*He said,*

*“When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.*

*And in the morning, It will be foul weather today*

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*the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

*A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed.” Matt 16:2-4*

The sign of Jonah referred to is, of course, the sign of the resurrection. As Jonas had been in the belly of the whale for three days, so Jesus was in the belly of Hell three days before he rose again. The sign of the second coming will also be the resurrection, this time it will be the first-fruits rapture of the Church, those who are dead in Christ and those who remain alive (and have been faithfully watching for and listening for Christ’s calling) will be taken out of the “belly” of a coming “Hell”. Jesus refused to put on a supernatural circus for the faithless leaders of that day and our day will be no different. Jesus will not send lights flashing in the skies, or comets racing through space spelling out his name to herald the coming of the rapture. The signs of the rapture will be, and have been, prophecy being fulfilled. The ultimate sign of His Second Coming with ten thousands of His saints actually will be the rapture. The warning is already given. The rapture will

happen in a twinkling of an eye though it will be much fewer people than is generally expected by the army of regular Christian teachers of prophecy.

Christ's beloved bride will be faithful while she awaits His call. She will be a spiritual virgin keeping herself clean from idolatry and fornication while making herself pure with the hope of His calling. She is striving for what the apostle Paul called "*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" Phil 3:14 A calling so great Paul counted everything else as dung.

It is time, then, to get ready. As Jesus advised, pray that you be accounted worthy that you escape all the evils that are coming on the world so you might be found standing before the Son of Man in glory, a part of the large family of redeemed people, and yet also part of the much, much smaller and select group of bride's that are 'married' to Him in eternity.

### PART III

# LIFE IN THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH

*“The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

*My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.*

*My beloved spake and, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

*For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; and the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*

*The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.*

*Until the day break, and the shadow flee away,*

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*turn, my beloved, and be thou like the roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” (From the Song of Solomon chapter two)*

The Bride of Christ waits today to hear the voice of her Lord. Jesus also waits looking through the latticework of prophecy for that moment when the Father will tell him to say, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!” The signs have ripened. Israel is budding again and the Church has gone through the ripening of good fruits by a revived sense of faith by the Spirit. The Rapture is coming soon; it will happen in a twinkling of an eye. It is reasonable to anticipate the soon coming of judgment. The climate is rife with signs of the end. The wise are waiting on the edge of their seat, waiting to hear the call from heaven for the wedding to commence. People outside the institutional churches we suspect are now being invited to join in with the ‘Philadelphia’ Church.



# POSITION OF CHURCH POINTS TO END OF CHURCH AGE

The reemergence of the ancient biblical nations into the confederacies God prophesied of thousands of years ago is a glaring sign of the time, warning modern travelers that the end of the road is near. Likewise, the character of today's Church is a great sign forecasting God's challenge of Satan on the open field of combat for control of the heavens and the earth. In this last hour, the Church is moving in two very different and determined directions. One church loves the world the other church loves their personal relationship with Jesus. The much larger and more visible church, which is in love with the world, lusts after earthly power and is moving headlong into ecumenism. The other church, which loves Christ more than anything else lives and moves in

a much more quiet realm, but one of full spiritual power and influence. Indeed we have already arrived at this juncture, just as many of the preachers and genuine prophets of the last hundred years up to the present day have foreseen.

Today, as was forewarned during the revivals of thirty, forty years ago, worldly Christianity surges on making alliances with secular powers while seeking to influence governments for their own gain. But the Bride of Christ takes to heart those seven exhortations of knowledge and warnings not to be ignorant and by faith turns them into an active living reality. This spirit-filled church will not be tied together by tangible bonds of organization, yet it will be united in spirit, faith and doctrine. She will be watching for the resurrection, as she observes with joy the restoration of Israel and waits with peace as the signs of coming judgment fall. She will pick up her cross to follow earnestly after Christ and will be led by the Spirit into bringing forth the fruits of righteousness.

As Jesus says, *“You shall know them by their fruits”*. We will be able to identify these contrasting sisters not by what they say but by what they do. Churches of this world will kiss the earth, shake hands with its base leaders and proclaim with pride the start of a new thousand year reign of man on earth with

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the worldly church as the head of this humanistic alliance. It will speak of confidence in governments of Man, even with hope and faith that they can make a good place in which we can live free, where every person will be able to worship God in their own way. This church will speak of God, love, good works, and the brotherhood and dignity of man while it leads its flock down a path of false righteousness. This church we may call Laodicea because of its likeness with the one described in Revelation. This church thinks itself strong and healthy and invincible, but in reality, as it says in Revelation, it is blind and wretched and naked. These are the big churches where people are being enticed to ask God for riches and power of this world, rather than to follow Jesus Christ in humility and faith.

The faithful church we can call Philadelphia, also because of its likeness with the one described in Revelation. She will be looking for Christ's thousand year reign on earth and not her own. She will embrace the Spirit of God and resist the spirit of this world.

## CHRIST LAID OUT CHURCH HISTORY IN THE SEVEN LETTERS

These two end-time churches can be called Laodicea

and Philadelphia because of the prophecies of Jesus himself. The seven letters to the churches in Revelation were written by Christ to give the Church insight into its complex character and nature. If we want to understand the character and direction of the Church in these last hours before Christ's return it is imperative that we understand those seven letters. Dictated to the apostle John by Jesus at the end of the first century AD., these letters have profound meaning for all Christians. Understanding the wisdom of faith in these letters, what to believe and not believe, what to do and what to avoid doing, is of much greater importance for today's church than even unravelling the events of the great tribulation (although those things are of critical importance as well). In these letters Christ has charted the history of the Church Age; in them He commends the Church's faith and at the same time rebukes its ignorance and sin. He warns the idolaters and disobedient that they will not find refuge from judgment in the churches unless they repent of unholiness and sin. To the faithful, to the 'overcomers', he promises rewards and freedom beyond anything we can imagine. Besides being a spiritual barometer for all believers to gauge their own faithfulness, these letters show where the Church has been and where it is heading giving a

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clear idea of what the believer ought to be in terms of faith and doctrine.

Understanding that Christ prophesied the course of His Church and he targeted the particular pitfalls to avoid can save the believer mountains of disappointment, frustration and even out-and-out failure. It should also be kept in mind that much of the sin and presumption of past Church Ages has been inherited by our modern denominations, so that today these falsehoods are stubbornly accepted as gospel truths. In reality they are often just traditions, assumed to be godly, but in fact, are built on a foundation of sin.



# LETTERS TO CHURCHES PLOT THE COURSE

Remembering that Christ foreknew the condition that would befall the Church, and that nothing is or ever has been out of control, we can take a brief look at the course of the Church as mapped out by the seven letters.

The course can be plotted as an upside-down, bell shaped curve. The Church did not plunge into ignorance instantly, nor has it climbed out of the abyss overnight. The churches beginnings can be traced at the time of the apostles. This Church is represented in the letter to the Ephesians (by the way, the only letter written to Church founded by an apostle). This church's main snare was the

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trappings of power that comes from so great a faith and knowledge. Christ warned her to remember her first love, Him; and not love the power of the Christian life more. He warns this church that if they do not repent he will cast them out of 'The' Church altogether.

### SMYRNA

The curve then begins its downward trend with the second letter addressed to the Church in *Smyrna* where persecutions and threats led to martyrdom of many believers. Here Jesus encourages his sheep to hang on, exhorting them to be patient and faithful. Patience is their one and only trial. They must endure loss of life to gain it. In this they are implored to resist to the end, for doing it they are commended and promised an eternal crown of glory. *Smyrna*, as we shall see, stands only with *Philadelphia* as churches for which Christ has not a single rebuke, just encouragement to hang on by faith 'til the end, when those who are faithful shall receive their rich reward.

### PERGAMOS

Our 'graph' continues downward from *Smyrna* to the era known as *Pergamos* where egregious heresies



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and false doctrines had crept into the Church via religious spirits and the ambitions of power mongering men. It is the start of apostasy, the beginning of the 'great falling away' 2Thess, 2:2,3&7. The sin of Balaam (teaching to mix things up by blending worldly behavior and false religion with some pure things of God); and, a hierarchical system called Nicolaitanism (the Greek words, *Nike*: meaning Victory or conquer; and *Laity*: meaning, the people = *conquering over the people*). This Christ says He hates.

## THYATIRA

The fourth letter takes us to the depths of the Church's ignorance, symbolized by Thyatira. In Thyatira, the religion of man gained the highest influence in the Church. It is best symbolized by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican/Episcopal churches. The system of priests and laypeople in Judaism, which had passed away with the coming of the New Covenant found a home in churches like those. (Jesus actually says, repeats in the fourth letter what he said in the third when he says that he hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans

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“Nico” meaning Conqueror, “laitanes” referring to the people.<sup>1</sup>

The Papal degradation, perversions of truth and terrible persecutions brought on by an all-powerful and worldly-minded Church are a matter of historical fact, not refutable or excusable. They testify to the truth of God’s prophecy as well as the history of the Church and the historical nature of the letters while fulfilling Paul’s prophecy of a “great falling away”.

SARDIS

After many centuries of what man’s own history has aptly dubbed “The Dark Ages” God began the Church on its upward climb. The Church’s knowledge would be fully restored and her faith would be enhanced even beyond the measure it enjoyed in the early years during the first, or former, rain and the days of the original apostles. The climb would bring the Church back to its origins of faith, back to a rounded relationship with the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

1. For a detailed discussion on this and for a concise and edifying study of the seven letters see Gordon Lindsey’s series on Revelation; Published by Christ for the Nations.“ 1971 Dallas Texas 75224. Also: Joseph Seiss, Jesus Letters to the Churches on-line books.

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The days of the reformation, the days of Calvin and Zwingli and Luther, were only the beginning of the full revival, just the first stirring of the bride awakening to begin her preparations for the return of her groom. Salvation by faith shook the sleeping Church awake but did not entirely set her on her feet. The church of the reformation did not accept the Holy Ghost as its personal guide and teacher, as the one who could best prepare her for the coming wedding. In fact, this church was far from being the great restorer of the faith it supposed itself to be. The letter to Sardis represents the reformation church and as a result of its effectual rejection of the third member of the Trinity has in it one of the most frightening rebukes that Christ has ever given. Jesus declared to them, "*thou hath a name that thou livest, and art dead.*" He sternly warns them that if they do not repent and strengthen the things which remain that He will come upon them as a thief and they will be lost. He heads his letter to them as the one who has the seven Spirits of God because this church has not accepted the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This church's Trinity is the Father, Son and Holy Ghost only in word; in truth its Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Holy Bible. For her rejection of the Holy Ghost this church and its advocates sit

in grave jeopardy of being turned away from the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Nevertheless, the revival, the climb from ignorance, was begun in large part by the reformation movement of Sardis-like faith. The scriptures had come to the common people reestablishing knowledge and faith in the Church. Yet the essential ingredient of revival was still not present in its fullness; the vitality of the sweet Holy Ghost. First, it came in drizzles here and there over two centuries until today, in our lifetime, in this generation, it has fallen on the world in a deluge of love all over the earth. Communist and free men, old and young, women and children, the uneducated, cripples, addicts, and every kind, in every country, of every race, have been 'rained on'.

With the 'rain' has come strong vines and sweet grapes, beautiful flowers and fine fruit; just as in the years of the Church. If we chose to, if we are obedient to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, we can live and flourish in this spiritual garden of faith. If we refuse to hear what the Spirit is saying to churches and instead follow man's voice in the Church we can end up living and starving in a garden of plastic fruits where the fruits may look good but have no nourishment. It is time for the full

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evolution of both the good side and the bad side of the Church.

### PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA: PLATEAU TOGETHER AT THE END

The final upsurge of the graph is represented by the last two letters to the churches. These two eras of Church history flourish simultaneously, but they also represent the greatest contrast of all. Philadelphia has no spiritual fault to cause Jesus to rebuke her. Laodicea has nothing at that pleases Him. The Philadelphian church Christ loves dearly; the other, Christ holds no hope for, but maybe a few individuals here or there. He threatens to spit Laodicea out of his mouth with disdain, while Philadelphia is promised rewards and preeminence in heaven as well as protection here on earth during the hour of judgment. Laodicea is threatened with the fullness of God's wrath.

Only those Laodiceans who respond when Christ knocks on the door of their heart will be spared terrible judgment. In terms of worldly success however, Philadelphia is *weak and must hold fast to the little strength that she has* while Laodicea thinks itself "*rich, and increased with goods, and (in) need of nothing,*"

and does not know it, but is “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.*”

These two churches, one with insight, secure in Christ alone, and the other willfully ignorant and fat in heart, but rich in the world, exist side-by-side today and shall until the churches are dissolved by the oppression of the actual Antichrist who looms on today’s world horizon. One church can be found along the wide and well-travelled roadways, in the center of town, on the broadways of the cities, across the great internet of the information highway. The other is down a narrow one-way path found only by those heartily seeking its existence. Those needy people, the bruised and worn-out people downtrodden by the World. Those who have suffered spiritual blindness, weakness in worldly prowess, those not comforted in this life for whatever reason.

See the wonderful promises and blessings in the letter to Philadelphia, prayerfully ask God for understanding of their application, and then come, and be encouraged to be part of this ‘nowhere’, ‘anonymous’ fellowship. I hope your faith will swell so you too can become, if you are not already, a living stone in this fellowship of Philadelphia the name that literally means – *brotherly love*.

# PHILADELPHIA: STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

Paul's words to the Corinthians will be understood by those of Philadelphian faith.

*“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” 2 Cor. 12:9-10*

This church will not be found on any street corner, or at a Bible College, it will not have a membership roll at least not one written on this earth, This church is invisible and weak in worldly terms, a church persecuted from within the Church itself; a church with no social influence and a church in

constant peril of temptation, but in a wonderful and complete way she is the strongest and greatest too, because she is entrenched in God's word and ways. This church has had 'membership' down through the Church Age (as the other six), but particularly now, with the revival of all things for the end time, this church is coming into its fullness. Its full potential is about to explode.

To hear the calling of this church demands a love for the life of faith. To respond to the call one must be delivered from the fear of the unknown. The kind of faith required in this pew-less church is so foreign to the faith of man, and so much God's kind of faith, that it passes all knowledge of this world. The life of the Philadelphian is not only unattainable for man in the flesh, but entirely incomprehensible and can only be experienced by complete trust in God's power and love. The aspiring Philadelphian learns that he must let God lead him blindfolded along never before trodden paths, as pioneers without knowledge of where to go or what to do, they must trust the Holy Ghost as their unfailing scout and guide. So is the nature of the faith God requires here. It is Abraham going to a strange land, Moses confronting the Pharaoh, David meeting Goliath on the battlefield and John the Baptist preaching repentance in the wilderness.



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Here by the light of the Candlestick of Philadelphia a simple believer living a nondescript life can be producing the pearls of faith that please God wholly. Abiding in this place of brotherly love a person of 'unimportance', doing no traditionally accepted churchy good works can be exalting God in the highest and preparing for Christ a testimony of Christ's love that will live into eternity forever. The person in this assembly of faith will have a single eye fixed on Jesus, the hope of a new world to come, and the promises of eternity with God.

### HERE IS WHAT THE LETTER TO PHILADELPHIA REVEALS.

#### CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR

The church of Philadelphia is a special church because she has the promise of the open door. The door of faith is continually open here and literally, the sky is the limit. Here faith gives one the boldness to enter the heavenly throne room of God to make requests in the name of Jesus. The door of prophecy is open; and the pathway home is clearly marked. At the end of the path is that 'Big' open door, that door that will open at the twinkling of an eye to gather the faithful sojourners into the mansions Jesus has

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prepared for them. The open door has endless applications to the Philadelphian; its all around significance is mercy with a capital 'M' the ultimate expression of the open door mercy will be the rapture.

PHILADELPHIA'S PASTOR IS HOLY AND  
TRUE

Jesus pastors this church with the title "he that is holy, he that is true". Accordingly, Christ will feed his flock here with truth and holiness. To have fellowship in this spirit one must accept Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life and not just the Way and the Life. The one whom Christ has sent must be listened to daily. One will not be permitted to say outwardly, "Yes, God's ways are not man's ways.", and then callously live as if God should fit into the prefab mold Man has manufactured for Him. The pursuit of money, power and worldly glory will give off a spiritual stench the same as rotting flesh. In this church the walls are not of wood, or stucco, or brick; its light is not filtered by stained glass windows; instead they are the walls of truth and the windows are the clarity of word. The words of the forked-tongue and self-righteous hypocrite make a deafening noise when they echo off these

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walls. Their workers, we can have faith, will be driven out by the Spirit.

Intimately knowing Jesus as the Holy and True One will produce holiness and righteousness in the disciple. To follow after Christ in this realm means one must not only be separated from the world, but one must be set apart to God as well. It is a thirsty life. Thirsting after his every word, on every subject, in every situation, will be a delight; former presumptions about truth and holiness and righteousness, once thought to be solid as rock, will dissolve like sand in the wind. The past will be dead and gone, buried with the old life. The traditions of our fathers along with our ambitions and self images will be shed like dead skin to be replaced by the healthy covering of salvation's wisdom. By the standards of the world, and the Laodicean Church, this spiritual clothing of love for the truth will look like a burden. In truth, it is freedom.

### SHE HAS THE KEYS TO THE MERCIES OF DAVID

The Books of Isaiah and Acts both call God's blessings on the house of David "*the sure mercies of David*". In the letter to Philadelphia Jesus says he holds the key of David, which is the key to the

blessed mercies of God. God promised that he would never forsake David and that he and his family would rule Israel forever. That is why Jesus is of the bloodline of David. Likewise, the church of Philadelphia will rule with Christ forever.

Those who receive Jesus as the Truth will unlock the fullness of God's mercy, just as David did, and will be able to flourish in God 's unrestricted, unrequited love. They walk in the mercies of David under the mantle of truth. Truth and mercy blended together in only the way God can do it, adds up to God's love. Thus Jesus tells the Philadelphians that he loves them and that those who have persecuted and harassed them will someday be made to bow down before them and admit that it is they whom Jesus loves. Often in Psalms truth and mercy appear together, in God's economy they are as inseparable as life and breath. The two appear in unison in twenty separate places in Psalms. Psalm 117 is a simple Psalm, but one of the most reassuring and profound. It praises God for his mercy and truth and therefore his love. It speaks of nothing more and thereby makes the understated point that God is love.

*“O Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us:*

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*and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.” Psalms 117*

An oft quoted passage of 1 Corinthians 13 in describing love disavows those things not of love and summarizes love by noting that it suffers long, is kind, and rejoices in the truth. Truth and mercy. And so the Philadelphia Church has accepted Christ the Truth and wants his mercy, and is therefore immersed in the love of Christ.

In contrast, the Laodicean Church has fallen for the carnally gratifying and deadly way of embracing the law. By following the law with its scriptural, and not so scriptural, rules and sacraments it has excluded itself from mercy. What seems to be wonderfully pious and righteous is fatal self-righteousness. If they live by the law they shall die by the law, and no man is righteous.

Philadelphia is different. The people in this church will know the width, depth and height of God’s love because they will have the faith to count on God’s mercy, and not their own righteousness, to save them in every situation. “Have mercy on me, help me, deliver me, work this out for me” will be the cry in her heart.

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## OPEN AND SHUT DOORS

This love of truth and mercy will make way for a quiet but bountiful faith in the believer. It will not always manifest itself flamboyantly, it may never in some. In fact their acts of faith may be almost undetectable. The effects of their faith and prayers may be on the heart and mind and invisible to all but God. Unlike the gifts of healing and miracles this gift of faith will often be a matter of Christ opening doors and shutting them according to the needs of his people.

Jesus testifies to Philadelphia of his power “*to open and let no man shut and shut and let no man open*”. What a wonderful, wonderful promise this is and oh, how the Church has sorrowfully missed the opportunities it offers. Jesus will open impossible doors, while closing doors that lead to dead ends for the believer. The believers’ part is to respond in faith and walk through those supernatural doors no matter what the appearances while restraining themselves from forcing open those doors the Master has shut to their great spiritual advantage. Do not assume that the shutting of a door by Jesus pertains to only heresies or sins; they may just be a means Christ uses to direct us into the Father’s perfect will. Like a shepherd guiding a flock through

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a mountain pass, or through a gate Jesus wants to use these open and shut doors to bring us into a healthy place.

To have this merciful guidance in our lives we must be willing to do what Jesus calls the “*works of God*”: we must believe on the one whom God has sent; namely Jesus. “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto all good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*”. Through these supernaturally opened doors the works of God and the faith of the believer merge into one. The believer’s purpose and identity take their predestined shape and finally come into sync with God’s perfect plan for their life. Then our life in Christ can truly bare fruit that can be offered to glorify God the Father in heaven.

But there will be battles.

Those called to this invisible and unimposing church will need fatherly protection and direction. This simple faith in God’s guidance, and cinched together by a vivid hope in the rapture, along with love of the truth, will make this church a radical assemblage of faith hated by Satan and mocked at by the churches that are lovers of the World’s power and riches.

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## PERSECUTION

No doubt there will be trouble and attacks. Because of its weak station in the World and strong relationship with Christ this Church will suffer persecution. Alone without religious props to hold it up, the Philadelphia church will rely on the strength of its fellowship with the Father and the Son as her sole support. She will be in an exposed position and it will require the full reliance of God's protection and the ability to endure. For their radical faith, Philadelphians will often be outcasts among the brethren. Even worse, they will have to struggle against persecution from within the Church, from those, as Jesus puts in His letter, "*who are of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews (elect), and are not, but do lie*".

Because they do not rely on sacraments and law to save them, their salvation will be questioned by the other churches. They will be outcasts, if not always, in many circumstances and on many occasions. Her insistence on the truth and sound doctrine will cause her to be branded as a divider of the brethren; even hated of God. They will be thought of as arrogant and preposterous. Reliance on God's mercy and faith in the Holy Spirit's ministry will make them, in the eyes of most churches, out of order and



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unruly. Their insistence that one should be right with Jesus will have condemned the churches for their lackadaisical faith and causing them to label a Philadelphian as heretics that preach they can save themselves. Which nothing could be further from the truth. They will be slandered as rebels without true ties to the Church. Already, in this day and age, those who do not lean on religious crutches and perverse legalistic rituals are considered renegades without credentials by the 'established' Christian world.

The Philadelphia Church's hatred for the teachings of Jezebel (idolatry and seduction injected into the very marrow and fiber of the Church during the Age of Thyatira), the doctrine of Balaam (using God's word for personal and worldly gain) and their revulsion of the Nicolaitane system, and their rejection things like the Protestant ethic and the fallacies of the variations on the prosperity message among evangelicals will drive them to the outer fringes of Christianity and into their own homes where they will worship in spirit and truth. They will be mocked; and by all appearances they will seem the farthest from Christ. Yet in Jesus' letter to Philadelphia, when all is said and done, the day is coming in heaven when Christ will vindicate the believers of Philadelphia by proclaiming that those

who said they were 'Jews' but were not come before them and admit they were the ones whom Jesus loved.

The church of the open door has many freedoms; the price is fending off temptation and experiencing persecution. Attacks from Satan and his demon powers are subtle and clever, yes; but sometimes not so subtle. Christ therefore exhorts this people to "*hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*". This is the trial of the Philadelphians. They must remain steadfast in the face of ridicule and persecution. The other churches' trials are in their need to repent of deadly spirits, heresies, or sins, but the Philadelphia Church must hold on to the little strength it has while not denying the name of Christ. Even as the hour comes when this church must stand 'without the camp' she must stand fast in the faith God has given her.

#### KEPT FROM HOUR OF TRIBULATION

While telling the faithful to hold fast Jesus also proclaims: "*Behold I come quickly!*". This declaration is both a warning and a revelation. There will be no last minute preparations, no excuses, no warnings other than those given in the Holy Scriptures and in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. The faithful will

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be ready. The Bride adorns herself right now in anticipation for Christ's return. Jesus has promised great mercy on this church because of its single-minded faithfulness and absolute focus on the will and promises of God.

The following is one of the greatest and most exciting promises in all the Bible and it is made to the Philadelphia Church.

*“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon all the earth.”*

This phrase can mean only one thing. This is the hour spoken of by Jesus and told of in the Book of Revelation and by Old Testament prophets. It is commonly called the tribulation, scripturally it is call the *“time of Jacob's trouble”*, and will be a time of purging, testing, and judgment. The scriptures tell of the pressures that will build in those days and we can only begin to guess at how terrible it will be when the forces of man, Satan, and God collide in end-time fury. Nothing like it has ever been experienced, not in the Middle Ages or during the World Wars. Men will be tormented by demonic creatures from the pit; they will want to die, but will

be unable to find death. The earth's water will be poisoned, all green things scorched, wars, famines and pestilence will plague all corners of the earth, and a tyrant, so despicable and clever as to make Hitler look like a clumsy thug will rule the most powerful confederacy of nations the earth has ever endured. Midway through this seven year epoch period the Laodicean Church will be judged; she will be raped, plundered and put to the torch the world over. Its stubborn priests, ministers, and foolish followers will be embarrassments to the new hellishly inspired religion of the antichrist. Many will be slaughtered while others will be forced to renounce Christ, accept the mark of the tyrant, and worship before his image that has been set up in the New Temple in Jerusalem. Most believers, if not all, who do repent will be martyred in the name of Jesus. A statue of the 'beast' (probably the Antichrist himself) will have power to kill those who do not bow down to it and do homage. Only people who take the mark of damnation will be able to buy or sell anything. The worship of the antichrist will be the ultimate in idolatry. The Jews, the antichrist and the world will be in on this idolatrous blasphemy together. The saying, "*those who lose their lives will find it and those who find their lives shall lose it*" will have its literal fulfillment in those dark hours just preceding

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the battle of Armageddon and the return of Jesus Christ with the raptured saints and others.

Among the number returning with Christ will be those who looked for the Rapture of the Church and walked in the faith of Philadelphia. Just who will be raptured and how many will be a surprise to all but one thing is sure: those found with their faith in the World and looking for the third millennium of church glory inside the Laodicean Church in all its blind, naked, wretchedness, will definitely not be in that number. At the moment of the rapture the reality of Christ's words, "*The first shall be last and the last shall be first*", will be realized with awe by some and horror by most. While fighting a warfare on the battlefield of the spirit against demonic powers and dominions the Philadelphian will be made pure by hope in the rapture.

*"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him like he is. And every*

*man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”*

The Philadelphian will be made pure by the hope of seeing the Lord and becoming like him in that instant. When faith for the Rapture takes hold in our hearts producing that purity, it has a great freeing affect. In a true sense it is the climax of the faith that matures us in Christ.

Scripture reveals, that being given the name ‘son of God’ is essentially done in three steps by God’s working in us. We go from having the power *to be* the sons of God, to *being* the sons of God, to being *called that* by God Himself. Many Bible-belters want to believe that simply believing that Jesus is the Son of God and publicly testifying to it completes the work of salvation, but such doctrine is unsound, stagnating into a misleading and perverted understanding of what to be saved really is. It is true that believing Jesus is the Savior and confessing it with the tongue, does save us, not because it is a magical cure, but by opening the door for the ability to be obedient from which we can have access to true godliness and health, the word health in Greek literally meaning, salvation. It starts us on the process of being able to “*work out our salvation with*

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*fear and trembling*". We begin a maturing process in Christ which leads to spiritual health.

Starting is not to be confused with reaching a goal which is the conclusion and not the beginning. The goal is to attain to the promise God has made to Man, namely, that we shall be like Him. The metamorphosis from sin and flesh to righteousness and spirit begins when we receive Christ and are given the "*power to become the Sons of God*" Jn. 1:12; we then *become* the Sons of God by receiving the person of the Holy Ghost and walking in the Spirit Rom. 8:14; and, *finally we are christened* the Sons of God because of our earnest hope in becoming like Christ at the moment of His appearing. When we receive Christ, walk in the Spirit (dead to ourselves), and believe in the rapture we have taken the three steps of faith that open the door to freedom. It frees us most of all from our wills. It frees us from being choked by the cares of this world. It frees us so we can grow into the full stature of Christ. And it frees us to be patient; to wait for the world that is yet to come; a world where the righteousness of Christ will rule, governments will be made to submit, and the lion will lay down with the lamb.

Looking toward the immediate future, the Philadelphia Church will not have faith that it can somehow weather the coming storm of judgment.

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She instead is engaged to her Lord and is preparing herself for the rapture, waiting patiently for the day when her fiance will call her to the wedding.



# THE BRIDE

This is Philadelphia's place. She is the beloved bride. This church is a virgin not defiled by spiritual adultery, in whose mouth is found no guile, who will soon be singing a new song on top of the heavenly mount Zion. This is the first prize, the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is the goal Paul himself pressed for; counting all else as dung. This is the open door heavenly prophesied of in Revelation, the door, John saw when he heard the voice sounding like a trumpet calling him up to heaven. Fittingly it was John, the one called the "beloved disciple", who was granted the vision. John serves as a preview of what will happen to Philadelphians who have a similar testimony. The whole world, and the church of this world, will know, "*I (Christ) have loved thee*", when they will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and corruptible shall give way to incorruptible, and mortality shall put on immortality.

The stakes are high; the battle rages fiercely in

this church that has no walls, this church without form, with no creed or doctrine, this church that is anywhere and everywhere, yet nowhere. The battle is not like any earthly battle fought to control men's actions by political means or to corral sin by law and order. It is a war that rages against spiritual powers and unseen principalities. The object is to shed the temptations of this world and live the lives of open door faith. We can be sure the battle will increase in intensity as the birth of the kingdom draws closer. Antichrist spirits infiltrating the churches will seek to seduce whoever they can. The spirits will give their fleshly allies clever and deceptive words; they will appear to be the wise and benevolent servants of mankind, in need of nothing; but underneath their magnanimous exterior will be the stink and destruction of man's twin enemies, Death and Hell.

The gospel of a united world will be difficult for the Church to refute, and even more difficult to resist. Many of the most influential and trusted leaders of Christianity will proclaim their support for ecumenism. Indeed it has already happened, and more will fall by the wayside. The alliance of church and government with its declaration of a 'new order' will hold great promise for those whose hopes hinge on a new millennia of man's rule. Resisting this popular movement and its message of Man's ego will

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be more and more dangerous and troublesome to those of Philadelphia. Her protection is in the open and closed doors of Jesus.

### PROMISES

Great reward will be in store for this church which has to endure the persecution of those who say they are 'Jews' and are not. The promises that accompany the promise of the rapture and deliverance from the terrible time of temptation are most appropriate in view of the faith required of it. It is certain that the fullness of these promises is not revealed to us now, but some of the implications are obvious.

To the overcome, Jesus promises, "*I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God*". The pillars of course being of the utmost importance to the strength and structure, second only to the foundation and cornerstone. It implies importance and honor.

To these pillars of God's church, who have suffered the rejection of their own people, is given the reassuring promise that they "*shall go no more out*". Never again will they have to stand without the camp. The name of God and the name of the New Jerusalem will be written on them (associating them with the bride of Christ as seen at the end of Revelation). The new name of their Christ will

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be put upon them and they shall evermore follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, giving them a relationship with the Lord unique and special among the churches. The promise of being bestowed such special names indicates the intimate relationship the Lord is promising those who overcome in Philadelphia.

### INVISIBLE

The intimacy we have with Christ today shadows tomorrow's marriage. Following Christ through His open doors and stopping at the closed ones with Him is a foreshadowing of the promise that we shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Being rejected by our own brethren is a similitude of the rejection Christ also suffered. Standing alone with nothing to prop us up but our faith and relationship with God is the prefiguring of our position as pillars in God's heavenly Jerusalem.

The other Churches are promised life, rulership, position, or power if they overcome, but Philadelphia is promised intimacy and mercy, and the testimony that it is they whom Christ has loved with a special love.

There have been many people- believers and non- in all the churches and denominations who have

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been called to this intimate walk with Jesus. But the price will turn many off. Already many Christians inside the Church have rejected the invitation, but that should not deter us. *“And the spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say come.”* Rev. 22:17

The Philadelphia church calls to those who have ears to hear, the sweet Holy Spirit beckons telling them to seek the open door, to acquire the key of David, to find the liberty that is in Christ, and to live by the hope of the resurrection of the first fruits. It is not a calling of the stability which much of the church seems to enjoy, or to reward in this life, it may not even be to the security of fellowship where the sheer force of numbers and social clout can fend off accusation and persecution. The things of the church world, some legitimate and some not, cannot be found here to comfort and bolster faith. There are no reassuring rituals, not even buildings, no boards of directors, leaders or liturgies, and no formal declarations of doctrine to sign; this church is spirit, invisible, without form, knit together and taught by the Holy Spirit, pastored jealously by the one True Shepherd, the Captain of Our Souls.



The Philadelphia church is like a drop of water photographed by still photography which is seen to form a perfect crown the moment it is dropped into a body liquid, so the individual Philadelphian is likewise small and insignificant yet has a great glory which can not be seen without aid to the human eye. The church as a body is like water in the hands of God conforming perfectly to the shape of the vessel into which God pours it. It has no taste, no color, no smell, no form of its own; the Holy Ghost supplies the flavor and color for this church according to God's plans and the needs of His people. As water, she is invisible and nondescript by herself; only the Son's reflection makes her visible. Like the water of the earth, evaporating and falling again in a cycle, it travels back and forth between heaven and earth in almost mysterious, yet simple fashion, as a servant to God's life giving work.

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### WHO AND WHAT SHE IS

The letter my mother wrote to the people she met on the road to Philadelphia referred to questions we try to answer for people who come to us seeking faith and their place in the Church.

**Who is the Philadelphia Church?** – The one whom Jesus loves as his bride. She is the bride.

**What makes one a member?**– Faith in Christ, a full relationship with the Holy Spirit, and hope in the rapture and the purifying hope that we shall be like Christ when we see him at his appearing.

**Where can you find or see her?** – Gold is where you find it. Philadelphia is not to be found in a denomination or creed. We reside in an invisible realm of the spirit and among the fruitlands of faith. Like the water, life giving water, she is a tool in the hands of God, always conforming to his will.

**What does Jesus say about her?**–

*“..behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”  
and “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name”.*

**What does he promise her? –**

*“Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon all the earth”, and “Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”.*

**What does he exhort her to do?-**

*“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”*

**And what kind of power does she have?-**

The power of the Holy Ghost, and of a crucified life in Christ, and of true freedom. If we don't see you on the road to Philadelphia; hope to see you on that day in New Jerusalem!