

The Key of David

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Revelation 3:7-8,11 ⁷ "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ` These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens"⁸: ⁸ "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it¹; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ¹¹ "Behold¹, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

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In Christ Jesus, the Key to our present happiness and our future success, dear fellow redeemed:

Keys are essential parts of our lives. They are useful, for they open things. They can be frustrating, especially if they are lost, or when found they do not seem to open what they are supposed to open. Keys are often in our day being replaced by more modern technology, yet even with regard to modern technology we often speak of keypads which require a specific set of numbers to be pushed in order to open whatever is being locked.

The idea of a key, however, goes beyond simply a piece of hardware that opens locks. For instance, we speak of answer-keys in the field of education which help teachers and their volunteers grade papers. The word "key," as well, can be used to talk about something that is essential to the work you are doing. It can refer to the goals for which you are striving, the key concepts necessary to solve a mathematical question, or the keys to success or to happiness.

In our text from the Revelation, Jesus addressed the "**angel**" or pastor of the church in Philadelphia, a community in the first century Roman province of Asia. He quotes a passage from the book of the prophet Isaiah identifying Himself as both "**holy**" and "**true**" and possessing "**the key of David.**" Now, what is so very interesting is that in Isaiah the coming Savior is identified as "**the key of the house of David.**" (Isaiah 22:22) Both Isaiah and Jesus in the Revelation then state that the "**key of David**" is the One "**who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.**"

It is this thought that is picked up by the hymnwriter as he pictures Jesus in his fourth stanza of "*Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel.*"

*"Oh, come, Thou Key of David, come
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."*

On this Christmas morning let us address God in prayer and explore for ourselves the meaning of that prayer—**O COME, THOU KEY OF DAVID!** We shall see that **Jesus is the Key to a full life here in this world and to the gift of life we will receive in heaven!**

I.

Indeed, **Jesus is the Key to a full life here in this world!** But what do I mean by a “full” life? I mean a life filled with meaning and with purpose, a life filled with God’s blessing, a life of contentment, joy, hope, and confidence! Such a life is possible for everyone, if the Key of David—Jesus—has opened our hearts and dwells within them first as Savior and then as Lord! Later in this same chapter of the Revelation Jesus addresses another first century Christian church—the church in Laodicea. He tells them and in so doing tells us: **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”** (Revelation 3:20-21) **Jesus is the Key—the Key to a full life here and to life everlasting in the hereafter!**

My dear friends, the apostle Paul once urged the Christians in Corinth: **“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.”** (2 Corinthians 13:5) That is something that is important for each of us to do on a regular basis. It is easy to piously confess that Jesus Christ is our Savior—especially during the Christmas Season when we celebrate His birth, but it is not so easy to live our lives with Jesus as our Lord! Our sinful flesh battles against Jesus’ reign within our hearts. We so often want to do what we want to do or have what we want to have—irrespective of what our Lord says in His Word! We often act as if we are the lords of our lives, and we expect Jesus to be there for us when we need him—as if Jesus were simply our servant! My dear friends—that is not the case!

John recorded the words of our text under the inspiration of the Spirit of God during a time of bitter persecution near the end of the first century. The emperor Domitian was in power at that time, and he proved to be among the cruelest of the Roman leaders. While many of the Christians of that time were martyred for their faith in a variety of ways—crucifixion, burning at the stake, and being fed to the lions—the apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. From there Jesus addressed seven of the churches of the Roman province of Asia, giving each of them a message tailored for their particular circumstances. Each of those messages has special application also to us today.

The church of Philadelphia was proving faithful amidst the persecution confronting them. They had, as Jesus says in our text, **“kept My word”** and had **“not denied My name”** even though they had only **“a little strength.”** In view that their faithfulness, Jesus stated: **“Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.”** My dear friends, decades before this Jesus told His disciples after Peter had confessed that He was **“the Christ, the Son of the living God,”** that upon that confessional rock, He would build His church. He stated then what He was essentially stating to the church of Philadelphia: **“the gates of Hades shall not prevail against”** His church (cf. Matthew 16:16, 18). He then stated: **“I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”** (Matthew 16:19)

Jesus is the Key of David. **Jesus is the Key to full life here in this world!** He opens doors for us, which no one can then close, for no one can successfully oppose His will for us in this life. Think of the apostle Paul's words to the Christians in Ephesus. He wrote to them: "**We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**" (Ephesians 2:10) If we are so focused on our own plans and goals, we may miss doing the works God has planned for us! If we are not each day seeking from God in prayer the wisdom to understand, the eyes to see, the words to speak, and the actions to undertake, we may miss the opportunities to serve in meaningful ways and to accomplish great good within God's kingdom! What a shame that would be, for experiencing true meaning and purpose in life is tied to fulfilling God's plans and goals for us, not our own!

Indeed, let us pray: **O COME, THOU KEY OF DAVID!** Yes, come **Jesus**, for You **are the Key to full life here in this world!**

II.

And You **are the key to the gift of life we will receive in heaven!** Jesus concludes His message to the Christians in Philadelphia by saying: "**I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.**" It had been nearly 2,000 years since Jesus told His believers of the first century that He was "**coming soon.**" This does not mean that Jesus has broken His promise, nor that He is unable to keep His promise. People were already mocking Jesus' words in the first century. The apostle Peter wrote in response concerning those scoffers: "**They willfully forget that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**" (2 Peter 3:5-9)

It ought not surprise us that people today continue to mock our Savior's words and our faith in those words. But let us follow our Lord and Savior's command "**to hold fast**" that which we have! What do we have? We have the word of God found within our Bibles. That word is still able "**to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,**" just as it was able to do that for young Timothy to whom those words were first addressed (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15). We have the presence of the Holy Spirit—the "**Helper**" promised by Christ and sent by our heavenly Father (cf. John 14:16). He is the One who has set us apart by faith from this world and sanctifies us as we continue to use His word. Think of that beautiful reminder given to us through Paul: "**But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**" (Titus 3:4-7)

Oh, yes, Satan and this world will not make things easy for you or for me. They will attempt to wrest us away from the loving arms of our Savior. Therefore, we must plan with intention our walk with God—encouraging one another along the way by worshipping regularly (cf. Hebrews 10:19-25), by

remaining steadfast in prayer (cf. Acts 2:42) and making use of the God's sacraments (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26). The Spirit of our God uses these things to work within our minds, hearts, and lives. As we faithfully pursue an active spiritual life, we will find that our God is faithful—faithful to us in preserving our faith and, finally, in rewarding our faith. Paul wrote near the end of his life these words of promise: ***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*** (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

As we celebrate once again this day the birth of our Savior—a day of joy, hope, and peace, may we remember that He is the key to everything! Indeed, **Jesus is the Key to full life here in this world and to the gift of life we will receive in heaven!** Therefore, may we pray with sincerity and success—**O COME, THOU KEY OF DAVID, COME!** Amen.