

(The Names of Jesus) 11. The Key of David

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

“These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.” (Rev. 3: 7.) The seven epistles to the churches in Revelation contain the last message of Christ to the church today. It would seem very natural to suppose that the seven churches which He chose to receive these final messages were in some respect representative of the whole catholic church to the end of time. They are singularly descriptive of the epochs that have passed over the church since the days of John. The first, the church in Ephesus perfectly represents the church of the days of John, strong in works, but beginning to decline in love. The next, Smyrna, is true to the life of the next age of Christianity, the age of persecution. The third, the church in Pergamos, has some strong resemblance to the worldly church of the days of Constantine and succeeding emperors. The church in Thyatira is almost a perfect type of the apostasy which followed through the rise of the Papacy, with that woman Jezebel on the throne and the depths of Satan beneath her seat of ecclesiastical pride and wickedness. Then comes the church in Sardis. “You have a name that you live, and are dead.” This is a sure and perfect type of the middle ages and the absolute death of spiritual life, with the exception of a few names, even in Sardis, “which had not defiled their garments.”

Then there is a sudden burst of light “the church of Philadelphia. This message is all promise, encouragement and love. It is the dawn of Reformation. It is the gathering out of the little flock before the end. They have kept His word; they have not denied His name; they shall be kept through the hour of temptation and tribulation. They shall be established as pillars in the temple of God. They shall be enrolled in the New Jerusalem. They shall be received into the intimacy of Jesus. They shall have an open door which none can shut. There is one more picture, the church of the Laodiceans, strong, proud, wealthy, self-sufficient, lukewarm, and about to be rejected.

This is the second apostasy. It is apostate Protestantism. It is the worldly church, which already in our day is beginning to show signs of this final portrait; and with it comes the Master’s hand upon the door, and the solemn warning, “I stand at the door and knock.” The end is just about to come. But in the previous picture the end is also about to come, and the solemn message even there is, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown,” so that these two pictures of Philadelphia and Laodicea both belong to the end. The one is the picture of the little flock of simple faithful ones; the other is the picture of the great worldly church contemporary with Philadelphia, and about to be rejected by the Lord at His coming.

It is of this sixth picture of the little Philadelphian church that we wish to consider, or rather of the Master in the attitude in which He addresses it, and the precious names He assumes as He addresses to them His cheering message. There are three great and blessed names.

He That Is Holy

He is holy; therefore He expects us to be holy; for His message is, "Be holy, as I am holy." He is our example, our standard, and we can never rest behind His footsteps.

He is holy; therefore He enables us to be holy. His holiness is the source of ours, as well as the sanction and the ground of obligation; for He gives us His own holiness. He enters our heart, becomes our life, and lives in us His own pure, heavenly life. Therefore the apostle has said, "For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Therefore He said in His own parting prayer, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified."

This did not mean that Christ required to be made holy, as if He were unholy, but He devoted Himself in the sense of entire consecration to this one thing, the sanctification of His people. He set Himself apart for our sakes that we might be truly sanctified, and as we receive Him to dwell within us we receive the sanctification. We receive the Holy One and He becomes our holiness, and is "made unto us . . . sanctification, and redemption." This is the secret of our holiness, to receive Him that is holy, to abide in Him that is holy, and to let Him live in us His own heavenly life.

He That Is True

This is the picture of the Faithful Promiser. It means His words are true. "Has he said, and shall he not do it? Or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" How many precious words of promise has He spoken! How many things has He spoken to us! How many has He to speak to us today! Earth and heaven shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of His promises shall in no wise pass away, until all be fulfilled. Every one of them has come to us with the mighty preface, "This says he that is true." Let us rest in them, let us wait for them, for though they tarry, they shall surely come, and they shall not tarry too long. He Himself has endorsed them and is their personal Guarantee.

On an old mosque in Syria there is a strange and beautiful illustration of God's eternal and unchanging word. It was a Christian church and it had on its front, worked in the stone, the words of God, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your truth endures to all generations." When the Moslems conquered Palestine, they captured the old church, plastered over the front, and wrote another inscription in honor of the false prophet in blazing and resplendent letters of gold. But as the centuries have gone by, the plaster has fallen off. The transient record of human sin and pride has perished, and the deeply written record of God's Word stands out bold and clear, as a solemn intimation that all men's works and words shall pass away, but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

But it means much more than this. Back of all is His own true heart. He Himself is true, our faithful, unchangeable Friend, and the Guarantee of the certainty and stability of everything that we value and hold in Him. God is much more to the Christian's faith than even His Word. Abraham believed God, and therefore he believed His word. It is because we can trust Him that we can trust His promises. How we value a true heart! How we rest in a faithful friend! How we love to lean on one that we know is loyal to the core! Christ is absolutely true. He loved us from the beginning; He will love us to the end. It is because He

chose us knowing all, anticipating all, prepared for the worst, that His love is everlasting. He is so true that He will keep us true. Think of some of the assurances of His faithfulness. He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, "who will also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of Jesus Christ. God is faithful . . . who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. . . . Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. . . . The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it." So that we have the faithfulness of God vouched for our sanctification, for our preservation, for our deliverance, for our temptation, for our comfort and support in trial and suffering, for all we can trust Him up to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we can trust Him with all our heart, with all our weight, casting all our care upon Him, for He cares for us, trusting in the Lord Jehovah forever, for He is the Rock of Ages.

But still further, "He that is true" is the Guarantee of our true-heartedness and stability. He will keep us true. We can take Him for our steadfastness. Not only is God at the heaven-side to anchor the cable yonder; but He is also at the heart-side, through the Holy Ghost, to fasten it here, so that it will not slip as it holds us. And so this precious epistle is full of promises of keeping. While on the one side it bids us hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown, on the other it promises, "I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try all them that dwell upon the world," and still more strongly, "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." Thank God we can take Him for our courage, for our steadfastness, for He "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Blessed is He that is holy, He that is true.

He That Has the Key of David

This, of course, is a description of Christ as a King, as the real successor to David, King of Israel, the Sovereign Lord of Nature, Providence, the Church, and the Millennial World, the One that controls all destinies, and possesses all power and dominion in heaven and in earth. But more particularly, He is the holder of the key of David, "He that opens, and no man shuts; and he shuts, and no man opens."

How many things He opens, and opens forever to His people! He opens the gates of life; for, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." He opens the gate of heaven; for into that city shall those only enter that are written in the Lamb's book of life, and over the gate are written the words, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." He opens our heart for His incoming. He won our stubborn will and taught us to trust and love Him and yield ourselves to Him, and He alone can rule and subdue us with His scepter of perfect love.

He opens our eyes to understand His will, and He opens His Word to our understanding, so that we may behold wondrous things out of His law and possess all the treasures of His glorious truth. He opens for us the gates of difficulty and breaks in pieces the gates of brass and cuts in sunder the bars of iron and enables us to go forward through what seem impassible barriers in His work and will. He holds the key of knowledge and opens to us every problem that perplexes and every question that baffles, and will be our wisdom and guide in every trying hour.

He opens our way of service, our door of usefulness, and prepares us for them, for our work, and our field, and He says to us, "Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it." He prepared Paul's work and gave it to him, and He will give you yours if you are ready to do it, and none can hinder, for when He gives it, everything must go away. He holds the key of human hearts and can open them to your message. He can convict the conscience, influence the will, persuade the heart, draw the sinner to His feet, and constrain the reluctant to be willing in the days of His power. He holds the key to every safe and pocket-book, and He can say to you, "I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places," and He will provide the means that you need for every undertaking on which He sends you.

He holds the key of providence and can control all events and circumstances in your eternal life, to cooperate with you, or become tributary to you in your service for Him. He that opened the prison gates for Peter and rent the bars of the Philippian jail is still the same. He who gave Esther and Daniel favor in the courts of Persia and Babylon, and made Joseph to be beloved of all he met in the land of Egypt, and gave Paul the friendship of the captain of the guard, and made Cyrus, in the flush of his pride, send forth the captives of Israel to their land, can still open every door and control every heart. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of waters he turns it whithersoever he will." He will open for you the pathway of His will, the way in which He would have you go. "I will bring the blind," He says, "by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them." I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways. "I will work, and who shall hinder it." His people's path may lead through Red Seas and Jordans of swollen tides, and Jerichos of formidable and definite power, and Euroclydian's wild tempestuous fire; but He who has already burst through the gates of death and hell will fulfill all His counsel and accomplish all His perfect will.

When He makes bare His arm, Who shall His power withstand, When He His people's cause maintains, Who, who shall stop His hand? Beloved, will you use your key more faithfully, more trustfully, more constantly? Will you prove more fully than ever that you have One with you "who opens and no man shuts"?

How many things He shuts! He has shut for us the gates of hell, blessed be His name forever. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and they shall not come into judgment, but have passed out of death into life. He holds the keys of death, and its darts cannot touch His children until He permits them. He holds back the gates of temptation. Satan cannot touch one of His children even with a tormenting thought until the Master permits. There is an "if need be" in our manifold temptations. We are led out of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Between every dragon wing or hellish dart and us is the presence of the Holy Ghost, the bosom of Jesus, and the shield of faith, and He that was begotten of God keeps us and that wicked one touches us not. And therefore He says in this verse, "Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." This probably means the last and terrible tribulation from which the saints of God shall be taken out and preserved; but it also means many other hours of temptation from which His people are free. One of the terrible calamities of the wicked is that they are tempted above that which they are able to bear; but one of the most blessed promises to a saint is that he shall not be so tempted, but that he shall be guarded, and when the pressure would be too strong it shall be held back.

He also keeps back the floods of sorrow and calamity. In the seventh chapter of Revelation we behold an angel standing in the sky and holding back the winds, lest they should blow upon the earth before the saints of God were sealed. And so God shuts the doors of the natural world, the flood-gates of the tides of all evil, and says, "Thus far shall you come and no further," and there the waves are stopped. Fear not, He will deliver you in trial. The floods may have lifted up their voice and made a mighty noise, but the Lord that is on high is mightier than the noise of many waters and the great sea billows. The Lord sits King above the floods; yes, the Lord sits King forever.

There is another door that He shuts, and that is the door of the inner chamber, where He hides us with Himself, where He takes us into His fellowship, where He gives us His eternal covenant and seals and secures to us that "which (we) have committed unto him against that day."

In this closing verse He says, "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God . . . and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." When God put Noah in the ark He shut him in. When He takes us into His bosom He shuts us in. When He gives us His promises He guarantees them, seals them, and keeps them for us.

The ideas underlying these beautiful figures are stability, security and intimacy. He will keep us. He will make us a part of Himself, which is the meaning of the name of God. He will make us part of the New Jerusalem, giving us a place in His millennial glory and writing the very name of that city upon us as if we inseparably belonged to it. And He will give us the pledge of His own personal and pure intimacy, writing upon us His own new name. This refers back to the white stone and the name written upon it, which no man could read except he to whom it was given. This is the token of the secret love, the special covenant, the confidential friendship, the inmost, uttermost love of Jesus.

Now unto Him that is holy, that is true, that has the key of David, "that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens," be glory forever. And He answers back to us, "Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it." It opens up to the glory of His coming with the crown shining in the light of vision, as He cries, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man takes your crown." And we take Him to hold us, and to hold for us our crown, and then to let us lay it at His blessed feet forever and say, "You who are holy, You who are true, You who have given all and kept all, You shall have all the glory forever. Amen."

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