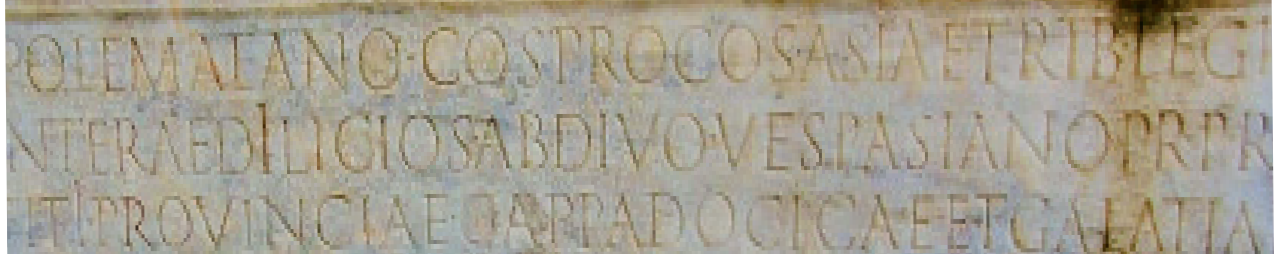




# FOUNDATIONS

Lessons in Discipleship  
from the New Testament Church



## Study Guide



CENTER FOR  
HOLY LANDS STUDIES

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## Philadelphia The Church of Perseverance

### **Bible Text: Revelation 3:7-13**

Have you ever heard that childhood song, “Patience” from the Music Machine, sung by Herbert the Snail? If not, go take a listen. Its lessons speak on the benefit of having patience.

Do you have patient endurance? It can be difficult, especially for a length of time! Patient endurance requires extra work and devotion. It often involves patience in the midst of suffering. The church in Philadelphia was known for their endurance in the midst of difficulty.

Philadelphia was a Roman city located southeast of ancient Sardis in a small region known as the “burnt lands.” It was a location of increased seismic activity.

We do not know a lot about the founding of the Christian community in Philadelphia and it seems Paul did not visit Philadelphia during his missionary journey. However, we do find Philadelphia mentioned in the Book of Revelation as one of the seven churches that received letters from Jesus. We can also surmise that the church in Philadelphia was one of the strongest churches in Asia Minor. This church endured constant hardships.

In John’s letter to the church, he mentioned their perseverance. They refused to deny the name of Christ even while persecuted. They received strong praise in the Book of Revelation based on their suffering.

*WATCH THE CHURCH OF PERSEVERANCE VIDEO*



The letter to this church also mentioned difficulties that the church was having with members of the “Satan’s synagogue.” These were most likely a group of individuals in a local synagogue who persecuted the believers of Philadelphia. They were causing issues and hardship for believers and for the spread of the gospel. This was not a representation of all Jews of the time period, or even in Philadelphia. Many Jewish believers continued in their faith of the one true God and in the spread of the gospel.

It is clear, due to the reference to enduring hardship, that this church had little power. But, even though they experienced persecution, they held fast to their faith in God.

### How did the church in Philadelphia maintain their endurance and how do we sustain ours today?

It was their faith. Daily communion with God strengthened the church in Philadelphia and will also strengthen us today. We can abide even in great difficulty. Though adverse events happened to the church in Philadelphia and to us today, there is a final hope in the resurrection. We must also remember that God is not absent in difficulty, but at work. As we lean on Him, what God is doing in our life may bring comfort and hope to us and to others.

### Be encouraged!

As you daily feed God’s Word into your spirit, you too will gain the patient endurance spoken about in the church of Philadelphia.

The letter to this church ends with these verses in Revelation 3:11-13,

“I am coming soon.[a] Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name. Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

For the church of Philadelphia, the beauty of that promise did not end there. They would be included as active participants of this temple serving as “the pillars,” the foundation of the temple. Their faith, perseverance, passion, and character in the face of harsh circumstances showed

the quality of their character. This is what set them apart from the rest of the world. Those are the kind of pillars we need in our life. Those are the kind of pillars we must strive to be. We are part of building a strong foundation for the church and the continuation of the spread of the gospel.

We can also bear the mark of the King, “I will write on them the name of my God and they will be citizens in the city of my God.” (Revelation 3:12)

In the ancient world, it was common for runaway slaves to be branded with the name of their master. If they were seen outside of their master’s presence, anyone would know to whom they belonged. Although using such a practice might appear to be a negative, Christ’s inference is that they, and all those who act faithfully like the congregation of Philadelphia, would be given the privilege of bearing the name of the Father. All will see and know exactly to whom they belong! Never again would there be any question of who they served and who is the One who cares for them and us.











