

Bible Study

AMAZING TEMPLE SYMBOLISM FOUND IN REVELATION CHAPTER 3!

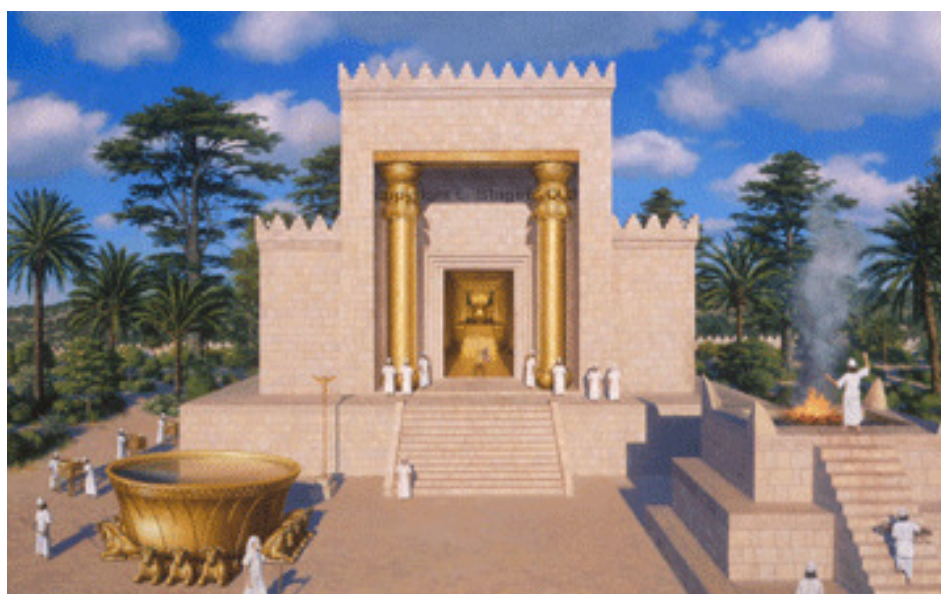
By C White

Version 2.3

The author has had a long-term interest in the letters to the seven churches and has written a paper on how they correlate to the seven eras of ancient Israel.

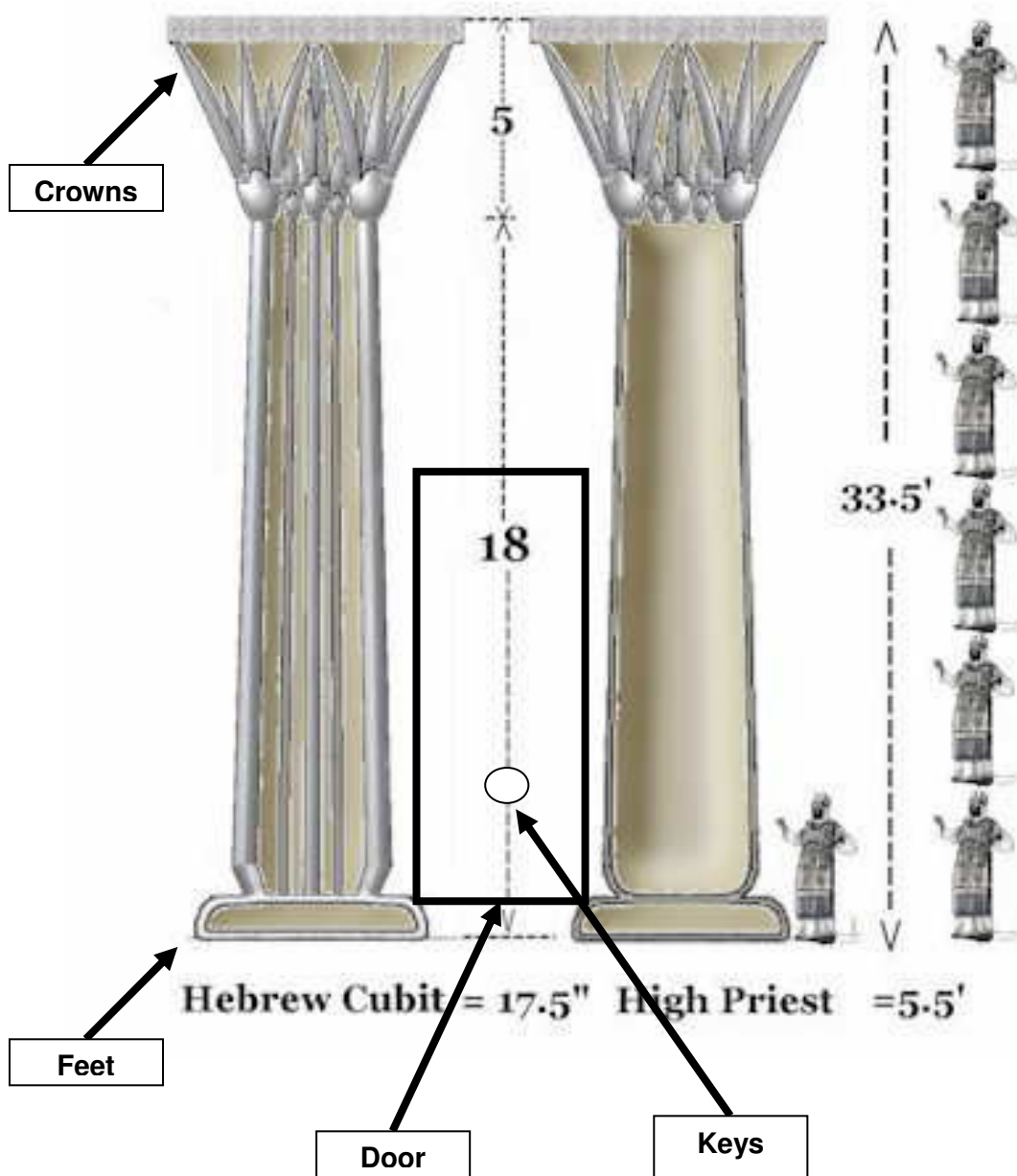
In the 1980s he put together some research which suggested that each of the messages to the seven churches may have parallels to the Temple and will be writing more on this subject.

In this article he explores the inferences in Revelation chapter three to the Temple.



The Pillars of the Temple

Please keep this graphic in mind as you read the article



Introductory Remarks

Ever since the first scattering of God's sabbatarian church recorded in Acts 8:1, it has not been one composite organisation. The Church of God has been small (Luke 12:32) lacking in great strength or power, yet maintaining the basic truths of God's Word: His Law (including the Sabbath sign), the Fruits of the Spirit, the Beatitudes and basic True Doctrine (such as water baptism, the True Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the nature of man and so on).

When the Roman sacked Jerusalem in 70AD, a further scattering commenced. Some, known as the Nazarenes under James the Just fled; others scattered into little groups here and there; while others were already planted in Britain and elsewhere due to the work of the apostles. Communication between them would not have been great due to the nature of the times. The Church has largely been scattered into several branches which were often not in communication with one another. These branches themselves suffered scattering on a regional basis. Like a vine growing all over the place, the Church of God has spread all over the earth, sewing seeds and truths wherever she may be found. It was only in this century that a major and prominent Work since the first century arose - God opened the doors of understanding and a great Work to it.

In any event, over time, it has scattered and then parts of it have regathered. There has never been a destruction of the Church - what happened in our former association was an attempt at destruction (II Cor 4:9). But God can use Satan's efforts as a means toward reconstruction for a new phase of the Work. For the Church to be tested and reformed to undertake a Work in the world structured in a way applicable for that day and age. This is the historical period we are going through - reconstructing the Church and its efforts for the years ahead. If we view it in that light, it is overall positive, even if it is a painful experience at that time. Now is the time to shake off dead wood and steer the Church into the future with a structure geared toward a new generation whilst holding firmly to the FULL truth and denouncing the evils of political correctness.

Yet all eras or phases of God's Church, no matter how far apart they were geographically or distant in time, were and are connected by God's eternal spirit which transcends space and time. If there are seven eras, overlapping each other to some extent, then it may be that they each have some symbolic representation within the Temple which portrays the entire church. An article will issue on this important subject in the future.



The Temple

Temple Parallels in Revelation 3:7-13

As we progress through this study, we should consider that John may have had Solomon's Temple in the 'back of his mind'. In the letter to the Church at Philadelphia, he wrote

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the **key** of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open **door**, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy **feet**, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 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 the earth.

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

12 Him that overcometh 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.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Note that certain key words have been highlighted. It is these words that struck me as I studied this chapter and led me to investigate whether there were any parallels between these (pillars, crown, feet, door, key) and the Temple and if so, whether the other six churches also had parallels to aspects of the Temple.

The Pillars (Rev 3:12)

In my original notes I wrote that the pillars appear

"to be definitely taken from Solomon's Temple. Philadelphians are likened to pillars which are steadfast and will not be removed. Why?

(a) because in contrast the pillars in Solomon's Temple were smashed and removed;

(b) because there'll be attempts to throw them out of the spiritual Temple"

In this light I recall the writings of early twentieth century Church of God leader, Greenberry G Rupert's warning and one of my all time favourite Church of God leaders. I had read something fascinating in one of his works concerning the *The Seven Churches* in the early 1980s:

"Verse 9 shows there is a great apostacy during the history of the Philadelphia church. Yet there are some few in that age that have kept his word ... How truly all this history is fulfilled before the eyes of those who can see, having eyes anointed to discern truth ... **Now is the time to not be ashamed of his truth and proclaim it.**" (pages 19-20)



Yours Truly, G. G. RUPERT

And how similar to Dr Herman Hoeh's charge to do the Work and not to be ashamed of the truth, but to proclaim it powerfully and proudly to all the world, regardless of accusations and misleading statements:

"This frightful condition lies just ahead of us. Just as the Sardis era of the Church existed side by side with the Philadelphia era, SO WE WILL CONTINUE OUR WORK at the very same time that another work will develop. Another separate work is yet to arise-made up of begotten individuals who are spiritually lukewarm! WOE BE TO ANY OF US IF WE TAKE PART IN SUCH A WORK! Here is a work, yet to arise because of our preaching, which will say: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." And Jesus will reply: "As many as I LOVE, I rebuke and chasten: be ZEALOUS therefore, and REPENT."

It is time to WAKE UP! If YOU become complacent, lacking in zeal, looking upon a local church as a social club, instead of having your heart in the gospel, you, too, may end up in the "Church at Laodicea." Jesus, then, will NOT deliver you from the impending, horrifying tribulation. Notice Jesus' admonition in Luke 21:36. "WATCH ye therefore and PRAY ALWAYS, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape ALL these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Let's PRAY and WORK, TOGETHER to carry this gospel to all nations so Jesus will say to each of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." (*True History of the True Church*, page 31).

Many groups undertake A Work of God, that is undeniable. But THE Work as defined by our former association has generally ceased, but may be witnessed in pockets here and there, amongst individuals, groups, congregations and churches.

To be a pillar, one must stand out and defend the truth in a strong polemical style and not be ashamed of His Word. Proclaiming a message that is so watered-down and feeble, is of little use to God and He would not be happy with it. We must become pillars which can resist the winds of doctrinal heresy. Sometimes it blows with immense force. At other times it is subtle and winds become a light breeze. Subtle and perhaps even more cunning.

It is these internal stresses and strains which builds strength into us. Interestingly, the Jews in the first century called the teachers of the Law "pillars". The implication here is clear: they would hold firmly to the Book of the Law (the Old Testament) and not try and read into the New Testament that it somehow supersedes most of the Old Testament. Secondly, these people would be interested in all aspects of the Law in addition to our general interests.

This may include land sabbaths, jubilee years, years of release, ecological laws, mixed fabrics. This does not mean that they fully understand these laws or they may ignore the fact that some of them are not applicable to this age (eg Jubilee years). Nevertheless they have lessons imbedded within them which it would behoove us not to ignore. They have a spiritual side to them and we need to know something about them if we are to implement them in the *World Tomorrow*. Further, as we analyse world news, economic policies, environmental degradation and so on, that should be done in comparison to God's laws which are all good and righteous. Concentrating on the New Testament and seldom venturing into the Old Testament, is just another route toward the apostasy suffered in our former association.

The two pillars of bronze in the Temple (known as Yakin and Boaz) at the entrance to Solomon's Temple were free-standing and independent. They did not hold up the roof (*History of the Old Testament* by C Schedl, page 332-3). Schedl explains that *Yakin* means "may he erect, establish, or preserve" while *Boaz* has the meaning of "with power" (or "in it is strength" - *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol 2, page 947).

This reminds one of Christ's likening true Philadelphians to these pillars in the book of Revelation: He will preserve them (Yakin) and they have a little strength (Boaz). One writer, Jordan, makes the following observation:

"Could the pillars in part be pictures of God's people as true giants, true Goliaths? It was David, of the house of Boaz, who defeated Goliath and showed himself the true giant in the situation ...

"Boaz is the most famous of David's ancestors ... Jachin was one of the chief priests" (page 13)

Both the kingly and priestly aspects of God's system are represented by the pillars. As the two pillars were made of bronze, Jordan believes that the two mountains of Zechariah 6 are Zerrubabel and Joshua. He says that Zechariah's visions indicate a repenting by God's people, "when this happens, God will give them a God-fearing king, a Zerrubabel" and thus a "thorough cleansing will come" (page 17).

Let us note again what Christ has to say:

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God, and he [as a pillar] shall go no more out" (v 12).

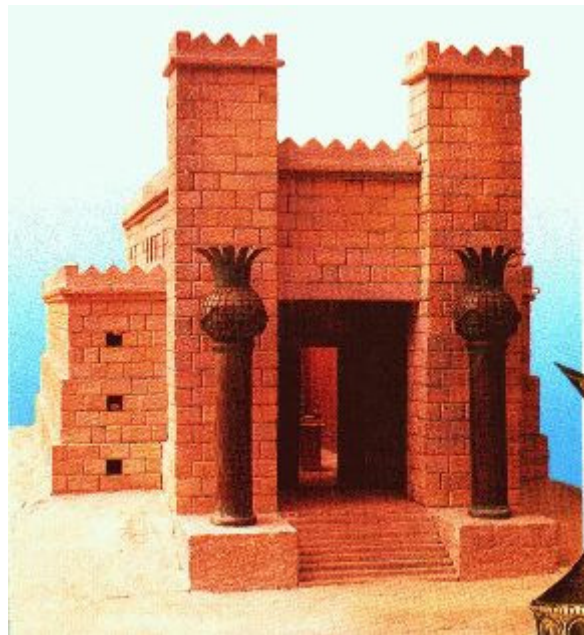
What could Christ have meant by that statement? Turn to II Kings 25:13-16:

"And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the Lord, and the bases, and the brassen sea that was in the house of the Lord, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.

"And the pots, and the shovels ... snuffers ... spoons ... vessels ... And the firepans, and the bowls, *and* such things as *were* of gold, *in* gold, and of silver, *in* silver, the captain of the guard took away.

"The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight."

Perhaps what Christ is driving at is that these implements sometimes refer, symbolically, to God's people going into captivity in tribulation. Jordan is correct, "the 'serving utensils' of the Tabernacle and Temple symbolised the people" (page 18) [see also Dan 1:2; Jer 50:28; Lam 2:7-8; 4:22; Rev 11:2; 18:20; Jer 51:11b; Is 47:6; 64:11; Ps 74:7-8; 79:1-2. See too Dan 8:10-11; 11:31; Lam 2:2; Jer 9:19; Ezek 7:21-22; Jer 6:5; 7:10; Is 63:18].



The Temple doors and pillars

The Crowns and Feet (Rev 3:11, 9b)

Could the crowns of Revelation 3 have inference to the crowns of the pillars? The pillars, as described, may well have been crowned with a double capitol:

"Likely as not, the 'crowning' of the Biblical pillars also consisted in a similar double capitol. The lower half was formed of four lotus leaves,

while the upper half was formed in the shape of a semi-circular crown. The space between the two halves was occupied by the 'chain-work' and the 'pomegranates' " (Schedl, *History of the Old Testament*, page 333).

We are told in scripture that there were two hundred pomegranates in rows encircling the crowns (capitols) at the top of the pillars. Four hundred in all. It was likely that there were 50 pomegranates in each row (Jordan, pages 3-4). Could there be a hidden Jubilees message here?

Pomegranates have symbolic meaning. Concerning Num 13:23 which describes them as being brought from the Promised Land, Bullinger in a note in his *Companion Bible* wrote:

"grapes etc. No mere accident that these three were brought. These symbolical of the 'fruit' of our Land, even of Him Who is the true Vine. He comes first.

"pomegranates. His worship comes next (largely used symbolically in tabernacle and temple, see Ex. 27, 28, and 29 and 2Chron. 3 and 4).

"figs. The common support of life in the East, next to bread. These symbolise the common duties of life. (The grapes and pomegranates its luxuries and spiritual privileges)" (page 198).

See also Num 20:5; Deut 8:8; Joel 1:12; Hag 2:19. It is obviously a token of the wealth and beauty of the land and even had a priestly context (Ex 28:33-35; 39:24-26; 28:35). In the *Song of Solomon*, pomegranates are mentioned six times (4:3,13; 6:7,11; 7:12; 8:2). It is associated with love as the Temple was, amongst other things, a symbol of God's marriage to Israel and His love for her. (see also my paper dealing with the spiritual typology of clean and unclean meats and foods - as types of consuming clean spiritual foods to aid in our growth or unclean poisons which will produce deformed spiritual children at birth. These foods have amazing spiritual applications).

In similitude to the 'crowns' at the top, the pillars also possessed 'feet' at the bottom. Scriptures which back this up are: IISam 14:25; Job 2:7; Is 60:13b; 66:1; Lam 2:1; Ps 132:7; 99:5.

What this scripture appears to be saying is that Christians, as pillars, will be worshipped at their feet in the Kingdom. It may have a dual meaning.

'They shall worship at your feet' may also be understood in the light of scriptures such as Is. 60:14; 45:14; 49:23; Zech. Ps 72:9; Zech 8:23.

Indeed, the Greek word is *proskuneo* = *prostrate, worship, bow down = respect*

The *Jamieson, Faussett & Brown Commentary* states:

9. I will make--*Greek* present, "I make," literally, "I give" (see on JF & B for Re 3:8). The promise to Philadelphia is larger than that to Smyrna. To Smyrna the promise was that "the synagogue of Satan" should not prevail against the faithful in her: to Philadelphia, that she should even win over some of "the synagogue of Satan" to *fall on their faces and confess God is in her of a truth*. Translate, "(some) of the synagogue." For until Christ shall come, and *all* Israel then be saved, there is but "a remnant" being gathered out of the Jews "according to the election of grace." This is an instance of how Christ set before her an "open door," some of her greatest adversaries, the Jews, being brought to the obedience of the faith. Their *worshipping before her feet* expresses the convert's willingness to take the very lowest place in the Church, doing servile honor to those whom once they persecuted, rather than dwell with the ungodly. So the Philippian jailer before Paul.

10. patience--"endurance." "The word of My endurance" is *My Gospel word*, which teaches *patient endurance* in expectation of my coming (Rev 1:9). *My endurance* is the endurance which I require, and which I practice. Christ Himself now *endures*, *patiently* waiting until the usurper be cast out, and all "His enemies be made His footstool." So, too, His Church, for the joy before her of sharing His coming kingdom, *endures patiently*. Hence, in Rev 3:11, follows, "Behold, I come quickly."

In this regard, I also find the *Matthew Henry Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible* comment on 2Samuel 3 to be of interest:

"God's choice (v. 18): *"The Lord hath spoken of David*. Compare v. 9. When God appointed Samuel to anoint him he did, in effect, promise that by his hand he would save Israel; for that end he was made king. God having promised, by David's hand, to save Israel, it is both your duty, in compliance with God's will, and your interest, in order to your victories over your enemies, to submit to him; and it is the greatest folly in the world to oppose him." Who would have expected such reasonings as these out of Abner's mouth? But thus God will make the enemies of his people to know and own *that he has loved them*, Rev. 3:9. He particularly applied to the men of Benjamin, those of his own tribe, on whom he had the greatest influence, and whom he had drawn in to appear for the house of Saul. He was the man that had deceived them, and therefore he was concerned to undeceive them. Thus the multitude are as they are managed. V. David concludes the treaty with Abner".

The Doors (Rev 3:8)

We now come to the doors referred to by John. Has John merely clutched at metaphoric doors to drum home a point? Why not use some other analogy? Or are doors as he uses them, part of a bigger picture? Upon close examination, John appears to be referring to Temple doors between the two pillars, just as he was referring to the Temple's pillars and crowns. These all have symbolism for the Church at Philadelphia.

In the back of John's mind, he may have had certain Old Testament historical themes in mind when writing these scriptures. Note how Ahaz shut the doors of the Temple:

"And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and **shut up the doors of the house of the LORD**, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

"And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers." (IIChron 28:24-25)

In contrast Hezekiah opened the doors:

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, **opened the doors of the house of the LORD**, and repaired them.

And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.

Also **they have shut up the doors of the porch**, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel." (IIChron 29:2-7)

The priests and levites then set out to "cleanse the house of the Lord" (verse 15). In the following verse we read:

"And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the

temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron ... And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for **the thing was done suddenly.**" (IIChron 29:16,36)

It would appear from this scripture that the Church at Philadelphia was very particular at preserving the truth. They would endeavour to: 1). Restore truths/doctrines; 2). Clean up the Temple and "put it back on the track". There is therefore a hint here of an apostasy followed by restoration of the full truth by these people.

Because of their fervour to teach and obey God's Law, they are also given an opportunity to undertake a big Work. See Acts 14:27; ICor 16:9; IICor 2:12; Col 4:3.

These doors also had keepers (IIKings 25:18; Jer 52:24) - Christians are meant to be spiritual doorkeepers - protecting the truth. Isaiah prophesied:

"in that day that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah ... And the key of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so **he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open**" (Is 22:20,22).

Given the time of writing of this particular chapter in Isaiah, it appears to be alluding to the re-opening of the Temple at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign and as such, may afford us with some clues to what Rev 3 means.

Philadelphia was a great centre for the diffusion of learning and civilization. It was a city where everyone was involved with evangelising. The letter to the Philadelphians suggest that there is every indication of a church with its back to the wall, a church whose energies are being expended in a righteous struggle against adverse circumstances - many from within. An internal devouring over petty matters. Its other distinguishing characteristics included: its people were in a state of expecting a great disaster; many of its people left to live outside the city (perhaps as 'holding pens'); it took a new name from an imperial god.

Finally, the ultimate 'door' is Christ Himself as revealed in John 10:1-9.

The Keys (Rev 3:7)

Clearly, Christ says that the church at Philadelphia has a key which opens and shuts. As keys open and shut doors, it must be referring to the Temple doors, given the context of the other verses dealing with Philadelphia as we have seen. Indeed, for the very next verse refers to open doors!

Refer also to ICor 16:9; Col 4:3 and Acts 14:27 - a "door" is sometimes figurative of a means of spreading the truth from a cleansed Temple - the true Gospel via every means at the Church's disposal.

It also means that this era has the "keys" to prophecy and thus doors are opened to it to proclaim a powerful Ezekiel Warning message to the House of Israel (Ezek 33:6).

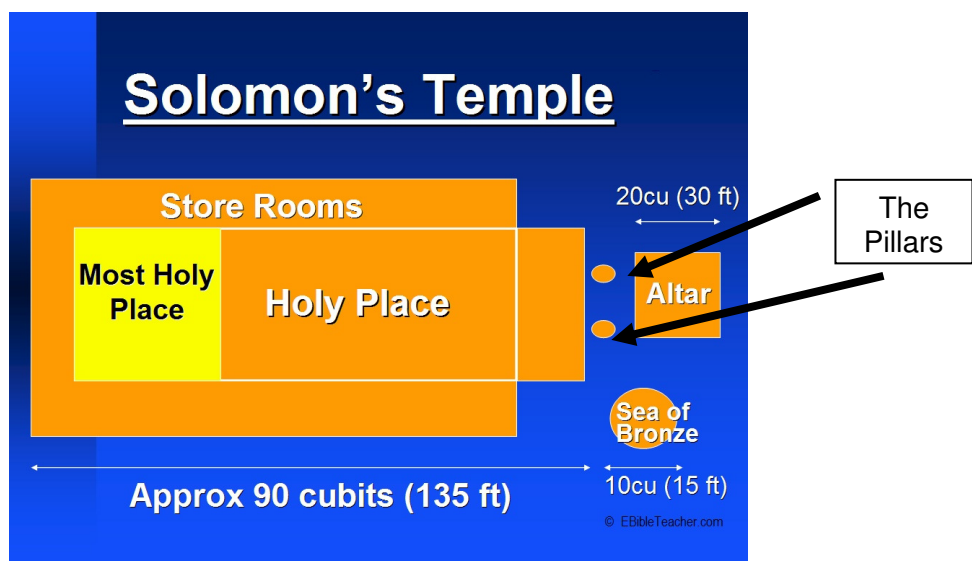
Isaiah also speaks of these keys (Is 22:22). Is it possible that there were literal keys which either David had cut for the Temple doors prior to his death or which Solomon had cut, and called "the key of David" without which it was impossible to open or lock shut the Temple doors? One can only speculate, but it is interesting.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states:

"What Isaiah had in mind no doubt is the grand vizier or majordomo, into whose hands is committed 'unlimited authority over the royal household, carrying with it a similar influence in all affairs of state'" (quoting J Skinner (1915) *Isaiah*, I, 170).

"That the keys have a connection with doctrine as well as with destiny of souls is evident from Lk. 11:52 ... The delivery of a key [of knowledge of scripture - IITim 3:15] was part of the scribe's ordination" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol 3, page 10).

In this regard, one should have a look at the following scriptures: Matt 18:18; 16:19; John 20:20-23; Luke 11:52; Mal 2:8.



Temple Layout

Doing your part

Well, dear reader, are we being moulded into strong pillars as an important part of the Temple? Through upsets in this particular era or branch of the Church, and internal stresses and strains, one is re-created into a pillar of immense strength and character capable of withstanding the winds of social liberalism and doctrinal watering-down. Interestingly enough, the Jews of the first century called teachers of the Law "pillars". The implication here is clear: the members of this Era would continue with Law-observance as part and parcel of their overall character development as with all seven church eras. In fact they may even take an interest in the Law beyond what other eras have done and as such may have a clearer and deeper understanding of it.

In addition,

"I Macc 14:26-48, which relates how the deeds of Simon Maccabaeus were inscribed on tablets of brass; these tablets were fixed 'upon **pillars** on Mount Zion', 'in a conspicuous place in the precincts of the **sanctuary**'". (*New Bible Commentary*, p. 1286)

As pillars, the members are resourceful and use their initiative. They are strong in the faith and will defend the true doctrines regardless of the consequences. They will also use their natural abilities (talents) and spiritual gifts to assist with the Work and will not let anyone take away the various opportunities which arise. The silliness of backbiting, negative comments, jealousies, spirit of competition and undermining of their efforts will eventually be overcome. Do those who try and derail the efforts and good works of others not know that God exists? That He will reward us according to our deeds? That He sees all that we do? Don't they know that He will eventually deal with them?

My friends, the wheels of justice and fairness grind slowly in the Church of God. Scalawags get away with much - or so it seems - for a time.

One more thing: There may be more than one branch of Philadelphia, just as the previous eras consisted of various branches. Not necessarily all Philadelphians listened to what the Spirit says **to the churches** (although these scriptures refer to historical churches and to Christians as individuals, Christ wants us to ascertain what they mean to the seven churches more so than what they mean to us individually). This "he who has an ear, let him hear" is an Hebraic expression and means to understand, to be very perceptive, intentful and to be sensitive to what is being said.

This can only be done when one understands the maneuverings and mysterious ways the spirit moves. It is mostly subtle and not forceful - it needs to be within us urging us onward. So with the church eras - some listen and some don't. HWA listened and as such doors opened up to him. Others of the Church of God did not listen, did not

perceive the signs of the times (in the Church or the world) and large doors to preaching the Gospel in a way applicable to that day and age did not open to them. God opens up doors and expects us to operate in a common-sense style applicable to the generation one lives in. Throughout the ages, the style of Church governance has changed in accordance with the need of the day, although the basic form hasn't.

Now, He is aware that hard economic times are coming upon the earth, and we need to do something about it now. The members need training and for the pent-up energies released now! When an economic downturn does finally hit us, do not think that that is the end and we are to wait around for the two witnesses to do everything for us. That nonsense has done its rounds in the Church for over 20 years. There is always the possibility of a false alarm or men getting far too excited for Christ's return and reading things into world events. The fact is, Christ said "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13).

My friends, the world needs the Good News of the soon coming millennial world rule of the Messiah. And the House of Israel also desperately needs the Ezekiel warning message - the two witnesses prophesy during the Tribulation, not prior to it. Thus we still need to combine our efforts as Churches of God and to use the media while we can, train the members, produce good guidelines for local activities and member initiative - we need to try all levels of reaching out to the world NOW.

There is no point in waiting for the two witnesses to arise during the Great Tribulation, whenever that will occur. No one way in proclaiming the Gospel is always effective. If we do indeed permit the members to play a part, train them and do not feel threatened and jealous of them we will be seeing Christ open another door to proclaim the Gospel. **JUST UNLEASH THE ENERGY WITHIN THE CHURCH OF GOD WITH THE RESOURCES OF THE MEMBERSHIP.**

It is up to us to listen very, very carefully to what the spirit of God is saying to us at this critical historical juncture in the Church of God. Many of us are perhaps not listening. Are we in a time of the predominant Laodicean spirit amongst God's people at the moment? They have emerged out of a period where the once great Philadelphia Era has been strangled by a circle of wicked men and have allowed a lazy wishy-washy attitude to prevail. They have watered-down the truth - but are still God's people. If we look closely at these inspired writings of John, we can see generally where we are in these sequential eras today. Philadelphians must stand strong like a pillar in the temple and be an example to others.

If we do look at Revelation 3 honestly, then we should be able to perceive which era dominates today and what our personal role and responsibility is.

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