

17. The Book of Revelation—3:10-13

(9/9/20)

We are currently in chapter 3 of our study in the Book of Revelation.

Last week we got as far as the letter to the church of Philadelphia.

As we said, the church of Philadelphia wasn't a perfect church—but it was a good and faithful church.

It was a church that was living for the Lord in such a way that, along with the church of Smyrna, was a church Jesus had nothing bad to say about it.

Revelation 3:7-10 (NKJV)

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 I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹ Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

¹⁰ **Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**

As we said last week, I and many others believe that this is a promise by Jesus to His true Church (Philadelphia) that He would 'open a door of deliverance' (v.8) and evacuate it off of the earth (rapture) *before* God unleashes the Tribulation Period judgments upon this Christ-rejecting world (chapters 6-19).

As we pointed out last time, those who believe in a 'post-tribulation' rapture of the Church say that what Jesus is promising His Church is that He would protect it 'through' the Tribulation Period and then rapture her off of the earth once it's finished.

They maintain that this was not a promise that He was going to snatch her off of the earth (rapture) *before* the Tribulation Period began.

But notice that Jesus doesn't say He will keep His true Church *'through'* the Tribulation Period—but that He will keep them *'from'* (the Greek is 'ek' and can be translated *'from'* or *'out of'*) the **“hour of trial”** coming upon the whole world.

If the Lord Jesus had wanted to express the idea that His Church would remain upon the earth during the entire Tribulation Period but that He would *'protect His Church through it'*—He could have used the Greek prepositions, 'en' (*in*) or 'dia' (*through*) instead of 'ek'.

Furthermore, to bolster the argument that Jesus is promising to remove His Church from the earth entirely before the Tribulation Period begins, He says: **“I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world...” (v.10)**

The word **“hour”** is not referring to a *literal* 60-minute period of time—but to a *general* or symbolic period of time.

The Greek word for **“trial”** is *peirasmós* and means *“adversity, trouble, trial or tribulation.”*

As one scholar pointed out that this is a promise from the Lord Jesus to exempt believers, not just from the *trials of* the Tribulation—but from the very *Tribulation Period* itself.

I believe that the **“hour of testing”** (KJV) is Daniel's Seventieth Week (Dan. 9:25–27—'week' of years), *“the time of Jacob's trouble”* (Jer. 30:7)—the 7-year Tribulation Period.

This will be a time wherein Israel will be the focus on earth—and the Church will be in heaven at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

So, here Jesus promises to keep the last days true church from the “*period of trouble, tribulation or testing*” which is coming upon the whole world.

For unbelievers (Jews and Gentiles), this will be a “**time of testing**” (v.10 NASB)—they will either *pass* the test by repenting and being saved—or *fail* it by refusing to repent and remaining lost.

Revelation 6:9–11; 7:9–10, 14; 14:4; and 17:14 describe those who repent during the Tribulation and are saved, thus passing the test; Revelation 6:15–17; 9:20; 16:11; and 19:17–18 describe those who refuse to repent, thus failing the test, and are damned.

Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

“**Dwell on the earth**”—could also be translated “**earth-dwellers**” a term that is used 11 times in the Book of Revelation.

Who are these ‘**earth-dwellers**’ you ask?

Remember when we started our study in Revelation, we said that the Book of Revelation contains 404 verses—and 278 of them allude back to the Old Testament.

Therefore, it should not surprise us that the phrase “**earth-dwellers**” is found in the Old Testament where it *first* appears in the Bible.

Author Thomas Ice notes,

“Every global use of “earth dwellers” in the Old Testament appears in a judgment context... It is of special significance that both ‘earth-dwellers’ and ‘world-dwellers’ are used multiple times in Isaiah chapters 24 through 27 often called ‘Isaiah’s apocalypse’...

Since one of the main purposes of the judgments of the Tribulation are to ‘punish’ (Isaiah 26:21) or ‘test’ (Revelation 3:10) the ‘earth dwellers’—it is important to know what this means...

When we survey the 11 uses of ‘earth-dwellers’ in Revelation, we see an interesting composite that develops. Not only are they to be tested in order to show their true metal (3:10), they are clearly identified as those who are persecuting and killing believers during the Tribulation (6:10). Many of the judgments of the Tribulation are targeted at the ‘earth-dwellers’ (8:13). It is the ‘earth-dwellers’ who rejoice and send gifts to one another when the two witnesses are killed in Jerusalem during the middle of the Tribulation (11:10). When the Beast (Antichrist) is introduced in Revelation 13, it is noted that ‘all who dwell on the earth will worship him’ (13:8, 12). Thus, 100% of the ‘earth-dwellers’ receive the mark of the Beast and will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

During the Tribulation, as followers of the Beast, the ‘earth-dwellers’ will be deceived by the false signs and wonders of the Beast and will erect an image of the Beast, likely in the Jewish Temple (13:14). While the target of the preaching of the Gospel by an angelic messenger will be ‘earth-dwellers’ (14:6)—not a single one of them will follow the Lamb, instead they will wonder after the Beast (17:8).”

Author Mark Hitchcock adds—

“The ‘earth-dwellers’ are unsaved people who, during the Tribulation, stubbornly and steadfastly continue in their rejection of God. They are those on earth who are totally given up to evil and the hatred of God and his people. The entire horizon of their lives is earthbound.”

And so, when you read **‘earth-dwellers’** or those who **‘dwell upon the earth’**—you now know it is always a reference to unbelievers (as opposed to the “*redeemed*” who are called *‘pilgrims’* and *‘sojourners’*).

But once again, I believe that in verse 10 Jesus is promising to keep the last days true church from the “*period of trouble or tribulation*” (the entire Tribulation Period) which is coming upon the whole world.

Henry Morris—

“Post-tribulationists reject this conclusion, contending there is no reason why Christians in the last generation deserve to escape the Great Tribulation. The fact is, however, that Christians in every other generation have escaped the Great Tribulation, so there is no reason why the last generation should be singled out for participation in it.”

Jesus likened this coming Tribulation Period judgment to Noah’s flood—the *first* judgment of God upon the whole world.

Matthew 24:37-39 (NKJV)

³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the

day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

In Genesis at the time of the Flood (God's first world-wide judgment)—3 groups of people were mentioned:

1. *Unbelievers who perished in the Flood.*
2. *Noah and his family who were preserved through the Flood.*
3. *Enoch who was taken (raptured) to heaven before the Flood.*

The Tribulation Period is another judgment that is coming upon the whole world.

Again, the Scriptures talk about 3 groups in relation to this final world-wide judgment—

1. *Unbelievers who will perish in this Judgment.*
2. *Believing Jews who will be preserved through this Judgment (the 144,000 sealed by God).*
3. *The Church who will be raptured before the Judgment.*

Enoch is type of the Church—and the question we ask with 'tongue in cheek' is—was Enoch raptured—'mid-flood' or 'post-flood'?

→ **No, he was raptured—pre-flood!!** Just like the Church will be raptured 'pre-Tribulation'.

We'll have a lot more to say about the timing of the rapture when we get to chapter 4—so be patient, I believe that God makes it clear that a 'pre-tribulation rapture' is His plan for and promise to His Bride—the Church!

Revelation 3:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly!...

The Greek word translated “**quickly**,” actually means “*suddenly*.”

Thus, the Lord could come at any moment—and only we who believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture can say—“*It could be today*.”

Mid, post, and pre-wrath Tribulationists, on the other hand, have no recourse but to say, “*The Lord can’t come back today because the Tribulation hasn’t begun yet*.”

Donald Grey Barnhouse used to goad his friend Walter Martin (the original ‘Bible Answer Man’) who was himself a Post-Tribulationist whenever he bumped into him by saying—“*Sad day, sad day, Jesus cannot come today*.” (Comment)

Revelation 3:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

The “**crown**” is your reward for faithful service to the Lord Jesus while you lived upon the earth.

You might be thinking, “*But I don’t have my crown (rewards) yet*.”

In Jesus eyes you do because when He makes a promise to reward you for faithful service—it’s a done deal in His eyes (that is if you don’t forfeit them before the finish line).

Rewards can be lost, Christians cannot be—rewards can be forfeited, salvation cannot be.

It’s not enough to be a strong *starter* in your race for Christ—you have to be a faithful *finisher* as well—“*Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward*.” (2 John 1:8)

Revelation 3:12a (NKJV)

¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more...

What did Jesus mean when He said, “**He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God**”

Pillars were pictures of strength, stability, and permanence.

There were two pillars in Solomon’s Temple—one was called *Jachin* (“He will establish”); the other was called *Boaz* (“In Him is strength”)—both names signify *steadfastness* and *permanence*.

The city of Philadelphia was situated in an earthquake zone.

When an earthquake hit an area back then where a city like Philadelphia was located, after the buildings collapsed, often all that remained were the huge pillars—Jesus offers us this same strength and permanence:

Hebrews 12:26-29 (NKJV)

²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*” ²⁷ Now this, “*Yet once more,*” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

“I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.”

The people of Philadelphia constantly had to leave their homes because of all the earthquakes in that area.

After the mega-quake of AD 17 many stayed away from their homes for months living outside the city in tents because there were so many aftershocks.

The people of Philadelphia were left feeling like their homes had gone from permanent and stable to temporary (tents) and unstable.

Jesus is picking up on this when He promised the believers in Philadelphia—"**He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more...**" (v.12a)

Just as Philadelphia was a city where many people lived on earth—there is another city, the New Jerusalem, where the people of God will live someday:

John 14:2-3 (NKJV)

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Of course, Jesus' reference to us living in the "**Temple of God**" (Rev.3:12); or that we will someday live in the "**Father's house**" (John 14:2)—are both a reference to heaven and the New Jerusalem.

Jesus is promising that once a believer becomes a "**pillar**" in the "**Temple of God**"—once they've been taken by Jesus in the rapture to heaven, that that is a place of permanence where they will forever stand (like a heavenly pillar) and from which they will never be removed!

This is exactly what David wanted most in life—"*That I might dwell in the House of the Lord forever so that I might forever behold the beauty of the Lord.*" (Ps.27:4)

Revelation 3:12 (NKJV)

¹² **He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God,**

the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him My new name.*

The ‘**overcomer**’ will have three names written on him/her:

1. **The name of ... God**, (Jer.23:6 “Jehovah Tsidkenu”)
2. **The name of the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from ... God**,
3. **The new name of the Lord Jesus.**

You only write your name on what belongs to you—so does the Lord!

I used to have a tee-shirt with ‘Chicago’ on it—my town. (Explain)

Revelation 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

The statement by Jesus admonishing a person “**who has an ear, let him/her hear...**”—is a very important idea that I would like to comment on for a few minutes and then we’ll close.

Matthew 13:1-8 (NKJV)

¹ On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. ² And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. ³ Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸ But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

This parable, in and of itself, is profoundly important to understand—so check out our series from Matthew’s gospel chapter 13, “*The 7 Kingdom Parables of Jesus*” (daybydayradio.org).

However, what I really want to key in on is verse 9 where Jesus admonished those present, “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**”

Matthew 13:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Let me paraphrase what Jesus is saying here—

“If anyone receives the truth of God and desires to obey it—to that person the Holy Spirit will give more truth and the ability to understand it and they will have an abundance of God’s truth in their hearts.

But whoever despises God’s truth and does not receive it—the Holy Spirit will take from their heart what little truth they were given (the birds eating the seed in the Parable of the Sower).

Therefore, I will now speak in parables to those who are hard-hearted because they see the miracles but refuse to comprehend, and they hear My words but refuse to understand”.

And then the Lord goes on to say that all of this was prophesied by Isaiah the prophet—

Matthew 13:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: *'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;* ¹⁵ *For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'*

Now this comes out of Isaiah 6:9-10—and here is the background:

God sent Isaiah the prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah to warn them that God’s judgment was about to fall on the nation for their wickedness.

It was a time not unlike our own—the nation of Judah was at a real low point both spiritually and morally.

In fact, we read in the book of Isaiah how he pronounced a series of judgments upon the people for their drunkenness, debauchery, idolatry, their dishonesty in their dealings with each other, their injustice, and hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy, because in the midst of all of this evil, they were still going to temple and keeping the Sabbath, feast days and other religious duties giving the people a false sense of being right with God. (Isa.1)

This false sense of being right with God was bolstered by the fact that the nation, at that time, was very strong militarily and prosperous financially—which the people mistook for God’s blessing and approval upon the nation.

You see on the throne at that time was King Uzziah. (Explain)

But while Isaiah was preaching this message of coming judgment if the people didn’t immediately repent and really get their lives right with God—

It seems that the people were saying in their hearts, *“the nation has never been stronger or more prosperous—you’re out to lunch Isaiah—long live King Uzziah”!*

Well, just as Isaiah was delivering that message to the nation—King Uzziah died (Isa.6:1) and suddenly the nation was plunged into some of the darkest days in its history.

And yet even though the people were on the verge of captivity at the hands of the Babylonians as part of God’s judgment—yet they still refused to repent and get their lives (and nation) right with God.

And so, God said to Isaiah—

Isaiah 6:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ "...Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed."

In other words, God told Isaiah to keep preaching but now the Lord said that those with hard hearts would no longer be able to understand because their judgment was unavoidable and inevitable.

Of course, this was exactly what Jesus was now doing by speaking in parables—these parables were a similar form of judgment on the religious leaders of Israel primarily and their hard-hearted unbelief—but also upon the nation in general.

By contrast, Jesus said to His disciples—

Matthew 13:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ "But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; ¹⁷ for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*."

The disciples were tremendously privileged, because they were seeing what many of God's prophets and righteous people in the O.T. had longed to see but never did—the arrival of the Messiah—to see His miracles and to hear with their own ears His awe inspiring words.

Jesus' disciples heard the same truths as did Israel's religious leaders, but their response was entirely different—the disciples saw and *believed*; the leaders saw and *rejected*.

And because the leaders turned from the light they had been given, God gave them no additional light but in fact now He hardens their hearts to His truth guaranteeing the nation's coming judgment. (70 AD)

And I believe that to fully understand what Jesus meant in Revelation 3:13 (“**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**”)—we need to know and understand that background.

Unbelievers can come to church and hear God’s word when it’s presented to them—but if they don’t embrace it with their heart as truth—the devil will eventually ‘snatch’ it from them.

Luke 8:18 (NLT2)

¹⁸ “So pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them.”

How do we know ‘how’ we are hearing the Word of God when it is given to us?

When you hear it—do you do it?

Do you desire with all of your heart to obey God’s Word?

That will determine ‘how’ you are hearing the Word of God.

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

Matthew 7:21-27 (NKJV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' ²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who 'hears' these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."