

## May 2005 Broadcast Notes

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-- Seminar #214:14,15,16

**Title:** Revelation Commentary - The Seven Churches - Part II  
Verses 2:18 through 3:10

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### Begin Text:

I did not complete our study on the church at Thyatira in the last broadcast. There are a couple points that I want to add, so, let's do a quick review:

Jesus condemned the church at Thyatira for tolerating Jezebel.

- a) Jezebel led church members to commit sexual immorality
- b) Jezebel led church members to eat food sacrificed to idols (the practice of superstition)
- c) Jezebel was defiant
- d) Jezebel used religious bamboozle or Satan's "deep secrets" theology.

In other words, Jesus was upset with the church in Thyatira because they had not removed Jezebel from church membership.

Carefully consider these words:

1 Cor 5:9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--

1 Cor 5:10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

1 Cor 5:11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother [in the Lord] but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

1 Cor 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

1 Cor 5:13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

These instructions bother a lot of Christians today because many Christians think that (a) we should not judge one another and (b) it is "Christlike" to be tolerant of sinners.... But, Christians cannot afford to underestimate the lure and transforming power of sin.

Paul says "yes," Christians should be respectful toward those who are sexually immoral or idolaters if they are not church members. But, he said that church members are not to associate or tolerate church members -- who are greedy, sexually immoral, drunkards or slanderers [liars]. Why did Paul insist on this harsh form of discrimination? Why are Christians supposed to treat sexually immoral pagans with respect, but they are not to allow sexually immoral brothers or sisters like Jezebel to remain in the church?

There's a divine principle behind Paul's words that needs to be explained....

Leviticus 18 is an interesting chapter. God explicitly identifies numerous forms of sexual misconduct that are an abomination to Him. Toward the end of the chapter, God said:

Lev 18:24 "'Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.

Lev 18:25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

Lev 18:26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things,

Lev 18:27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled.

Lev 18:28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

Lev 18:29 "'Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people."

Cut off means: shunned / disinherited / excommunicated / rejected

On the basis of the principle stated in Leviticus 18, Paul stated that sexually immoral people were to be cut off from the church because the church is a corporate body of Christ's followers. The church is a trustee of the gospel. It was set up to reflect the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and the teachings Jesus. If the body of Christ does things that offend Jesus and are openly defiant to His teachings and the directives of the Holy Spirit, then the message of the church harms Christianity. This is worse behavior than that of pagans who profess nothing. How can a church bear the name of Jesus but refuses to represent Jesus?

This is why Jesus warned the church at Ephesus: Rev 2:5 "...If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place." The reputation of Jesus among pagans is determined by the behavior of Christ's followers. Our behavior reveals what we truly think about God and His will. Our actions reveal our commitment to God or our commitment to selfish gratification. Our actions and words reveal our true purpose and mission in life. This is why God judges us by our actions - and incidently, so do the pagans!

Mat 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.

Rev 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

The primary mission of the church of Jesus Christ is to reveal the love of God and the transforming power in the gospel of Jesus.

People who don't know Jesus are able to discern from a distance what "Jesus" is all about by observing the corporate behavior of those organizations that claim to represent Jesus! Paul is clear. No weasel words. There's a high standard that goes with being called "a Christian" and those who refuse to meet that standard must be cut off.

Truth is, there's a standard of conduct that goes with every profession -- whether it is politician, medical doctor, airline pilot, lawyer, teacher or a fast food worker. Everyone in business protects and exalts the perception of their products. Paul's statement reveals a simple truth:

One cannot love the things that pagans do and call himself a Christian.

The Christian church must not to allow people to worship with them who willingly and willfully discredit the gospel of Jesus. Thirty years after Paul told the church at Corinth to expel those who were sexually immoral, Jesus made the same statement to the church at Thyatira:

Rev 2:20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

Rev 2:21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling."

There are no weasel words here. Jezebel had been given time and opportunity to repent and she refused... So, Jesus said, "I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery [along] with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways."

If a person continues to behave in a sexually immoral way after being confronted with their sin, their sexual immorality becomes defiant and defiance leads to the unpardonable sin. Everyone who burns in hell will do so because they committed the unpardonable sin. The coming lake of fire is dedicated to the defiant. The influence of defiance will permeate a whole congregation -- just as yeast permeates a whole batch of dough.

And an attitude of defiance can fill a whole church! We know that defiance is the most grievous sin of all sins in God's sight. It is unforgivable. Do you remember these texts:

Exo 12:19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it [during the Feast of Unleavened Bread] must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born."

Exo 30:37 Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD.

Exo 30:38 Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people."

Exo 31:14 "'Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people.

Exo 31:15 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death."

Lev 20:10 "'If a man commits adultery with another man's wife--with the wife of his neighbor--both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death."

Many people read these texts and argue that the God of the Old Testament was stern and harsh whereas Jesus was forgiving and tolerant. They use these texts, especially the one concerning the Sabbath death penalty as evidence that the law was done away with at the cross.

They argue that if you insist on keeping the Sabbath, then you have to insist on killing those who work on the Sabbath. This line of reasoning shows no understanding of God or His ways. God explicitly forbid Israel from sexual immorality, the eating of anything with yeast during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the manufacture of the incense used in the temple and from working on His holy Sabbath day and He required the elders of Israel, who lived in a theocracy, to put offenders to death because of defiance.

Defiance was the issue. No King can tolerate defiance for if He does, he cannot remain king. Does God demand that defiant people be put to death because He is arbitrary and threatened with their defiance? No. Of course not. God's laws are not righteous because He says so. They are righteous because they have been demonstrated to be so.

The point here is that God responds to defiance with death for the benefit of His household. This is why the wicked will be burned up at the end of the 1,000 years. Every wicked person that will burn -- will burn because of defiance.

If we defiantly continue in sin -- sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, etc., we become slaves of Satan and if slaves of the devil are tolerated in church, the whole church will eventually fall under his dominion.

Lev 20:4 If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death,

Lev 20:5 I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech."

I call this process the corporate effect: (Goats misleading the sheep...)

John 8:34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to [that] sin.

John 8:35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

John 8:36 So if the Son sets you free [from slavery], you will be free indeed [as sons].

Throughout the Old Testament, Israel's history is one of repetitious apostasy... And in most cases, Israel's tolerance for sexual immorality was the leading precursor to its apostasy. This is why God demanded that sexually immoral people were to be cut off from the camp and put to death! (Leviticus 18:29; 20:10)

This is the same principle that Paul advocated when he insisted that anyone who refuses to repent of sexual immorality must be expelled from church and Jesus affirmed this principle when He condemned the church at Thyatira. Fortunately, everyone had not yet fallen under Jezebel's influence when Jesus gave this message.

Rev 2:24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):

Rev 2:25 Only **hold on** to what you have until I come.

Then Jesus added:

"To him who overcomes and **does my will to the end**, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

These words mean the following:

Overcoming sin is not only possible, it is necessary -- through heart-felt sorrow and repentance. When we respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we receive divine power from the Holy Spirit to overcome sin! (Romans 6)

People who endure and fight the fight of faith to the very end will be given great authority and power as Jesus has been given great authority and power! On the day that Adam and Eve sinned, and Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. The Father accepted and made this promise to Jesus.

Psalm 2:7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son [subject]; today I have become your Father.

Psa 2:8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

Psa 2:9 You will rule them with an iron scepter ; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Psa 2:10 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

Psa 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Psa 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

On the day that Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus willingly became subject to the will of the Father. Because Jesus was willing to die in our place, the Father was willing to give Earth and everything in it to Jesus.

Remember the prayer of Jesus?

John 17:6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word."

Psa 2:8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

Psa 2:9 You will rule them with an iron scepter ; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Jesus extends the promise given to Him to those who overcome the world as He overcame the world!

Rev 2:26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--

Rev 2:27 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father."

What does this mean?

The saints will sit in judgment with Jesus and decide the fate of the wicked. The saints will determine [the amount of restitution](#) each wicked person must pay. ([1 Corinthians 6:1-3](#); [Revelation 20:4](#))

Keep in mind, the saints will not determine whether a person is saved or lost. NO! The saints will determine the amount of suffering required to meet God's standard of justice. How marvelous. Many martyrs will sit in judgment and sentence their executioners. Many victims of crime will sit in judgment and sentence their attacker. Many slaves and poor people will sit in judgment and judge those who robbed them of fair wages and took advantage of them.

Ah, the victims of sin will become more than conquerors in the end! They will judge the wicked for God has decreed this and it will surely take place. One last point, Jesus said that every overcomer will be given "the Morning Star."

The Morning Star is Jesus Himself. ([Revelation 22:16](#))

Rev 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, [and the bright Morning Star.](#)"

Jesus offers every repentant and faithful sinner Himself. With Jesus we receive a God of love, a Savior who was willing to die in our place, and a Savior who offers us His perfect righteousness. ([Romans 1:17](#))

What could be better? There is no God like the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let's review the [corporate sins](#) of the churches that we have studied thus far:

1. Loss of first love  
[Ephesus](#)
2. Synagogue of Satan  
[Smyrna](#)
3. Sexual immorality & superstition  
[Pergamum](#)
4. Tolerating Jezebel in the church  
[Thyatira](#)

Now, let's review the promises given to every overcomer!

1. Eat from tree of life  
[Ephesus](#)
2. Not hurt by second death  
[Smyrna](#)
3. Hidden manna and white rock  
[Pergamum](#)
4. Authority to rule and the Morning star  
[Thyatira](#)

We have three more churches to study!

Sardis  
Philadelphia  
Laodecia

**The Church at Sardis:**

Rev 3:1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. [I know your deeds](#); you have a reputation of being alive, but you are [dead](#)."

Rev 3:2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your **deeds** complete in the sight of my God.

Rev 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; **obey it, and repent**. But if you do not wake up, I will come like **a thief**, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Rev 3:4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not **soiled** their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will **never blot out his name from the book of life**, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Rev 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

A few have not **soiled** their clothes..... What does this mean?

Mat 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

Mat 22:3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

Mat 22:4 "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

Mat 22:5 "But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business.

Mat 22:6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.

Mat 22:7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Mat 22:8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.'

Mat 22:9 Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet **anyone** you find.'

Mat 22:10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Mat 22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not **wearing wedding clothes**.

Mat 22:12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes [that I provided]?' The man was speechless.

Mat 22:13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Mat 22:14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

This parable sums up man's need for a spotless wedding garment very succinctly. Here's the meaning of the parable:

The King of the Universe has prepared a wedding banquet for His Son.

The so-called friends of the King are too busy and distracted to come to the banquet. When invited, the "friends" excused themselves because it was at an inconvenient time.

Even worse, they mistreated and killed the servants of the King who announced the banquet.

Then, the King commanded His servants: Go everywhere and find anyone willing to come to the banquet....

A man was spotted at the banquet without the prerequisite wedding garment....

He is immediately thrown into the fire outside....

Here's the punch line:

The invitation to the wedding banquet comes with terms and conditions. The friends of the King were not interested in meeting those terms and conditions.

When the banquet began and a man was found who had not surrendered to the terms and conditions, he was thrown out....

This is the meaning:

Many are invited.... But few will submit to the terms and conditions. Those who submit are the elect, the called and the chosen.

In Sardis, there were members who had not soiled their wedding garment.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

God is happiest with us when we submit to the terms and conditions for salvation on a daily basis. What are the terms and conditions for salvation?

1. Submission to the Spirit -- Purifying our lives so that we may bring glory to God...
2. Loving God and His Word with all our heart, mind and soul.
3. Loving our neighbor as ourselves. This means caring for the sick, helping the poor, giving up our free time to assist others....

These things produce a character like that of Jesus -- serving others with the heart of a servant.

Reviewing....

Rev 3:4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not **soiled** their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will **never blot out his name from the book of life**, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."

Jesus said something to the church at Sardis that is widely misunderstood today. He promised that He would never blot out the names of the overcomers from the Book of Life. Most Christians misinterpret these words of Jesus in one of two ways:

First, some believe that "If a person receives Christ as Savior, he or she cannot be lost thereafter because Jesus will not blot any name out of the Book of Life - meaning once you are saved, you are forever saved," or ....

Second, some believe that "If a person overcomes every besetting sin, his or her name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life - meaning salvation belongs to those who achieve perfection."

These conclusions are fatal. First, the doctrine of "once saved - always saved," and the reciprocal of this doctrine, "Some people are predestined to be lost and some are predestined to be saved," is disputed by the text itself.

The Bible teaches that salvation belongs to anyone and everyone who overcomes this world of sin.

"For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

The Bible also teaches that a person can walk in the assurance of salvation and then lose it by turning away from the Lord and doing wicked things! (Ezekiel 18) Consider (a) the fall of Lucifer and (b) the fall of Adam and Eve.

At one time they were perfect, they were "saved," they had eternal life, but they turned away from righteousness and fell from God's favor. So, what did Jesus mean when He said that the names of the overcomers would not be blotted out of the Book of Life?

He promised the believers in Sardis that once overcomers get to Heaven, their names will never be blotted out of the Book of Life. Overcomers will never perish. Do you think this promise is limited only to the church at Sardis?

Of course not.

Notice how the meaning of this promise unfolds within the context of all the promises made to all seven churches:

Ephesus: The right to eat from the tree of life;

Smyrna: The second death will not hurt you;

Pergamum: The right to eat hidden manna and the receipt of a white stone;

Thyatira: You will receive authority over the nations and the Morning Star;

Philadelphia: I will write on you the name of my God and the name of His city;

Laodicea: I will grant you the right to sit with Me on My throne.

Listen closely: The rewards to the overcomers in these six churches will be implemented after the Second Coming. In other words, there is no revealing who the overcomers actually are nor is there any reward for the overcomers until the Second Coming. At which time, Jesus will return "with his reward."

This means that the promise to the church at Sardis occurs after the Second Coming. The names of the overcomers in Sardis will not be blotted out of the Book of Life **after** they get to Heaven. The problem for most people with Revelation 3:5 is timing.

Jesus was not talking about entering or blotting people's names from the Book of Life at the time He spoke to the church at Sardis (or any of the promises made to overcomers in the other churches). Rather, Jesus promised the overcomers in Sardis that He will never blot out their names from the Book of Life **after** they arrived in Heaven. This means overcomers will live forever with Jesus!

This brings us to the **second problem**. Many people misunderstand God's function and purpose for the Book of Life. According to Revelation 20:12, the Book of Life is not opened until the thousand years are over.

In fact, the Father wrote the Book of Life and sealed it with seven seals before any life was created! (Rev 17:8) This means the names of overcomers and sinners were entered into the Book of Life before life was created. This is why the Book of Life remains sealed until the end of the thousand years.

God does not want the information in the Book of Life disclosed until the drama of sin has ended. At that time, God will open the book and reveal what He knew before any beings were given life. When God the Father shows what He foreknew, He will prove that "yes," He has perfect omniscience. At that same moment, He will silence every accusation that He uses His omniscience to manipulate His creatures for personal gain. When the Book of Life is opened, He will prove that He will not use His omniscience to prevent even the death of another member of the Godhead - namely, Jesus! So, when the Book of Life is opened, the love of God will be seen with such clarity and grandeur that every living creature -- saints and sinners alike -- will bow down!

Isa 45:23 By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.

Isa 45:24 They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.

Isa 45:25 But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.

The **third problem** concerning the Book of Life centers around the fact that the Book of Life has nothing to do with man's salvation. The Book of Life contains a pre-recorded history of the world which the Father wrote and sealed up with seven seals before any life was created. (Revelation 17:8) Books of records, recorded by angels as events transpire, are used to judge humanity (Daniel 7:9,10), but the Book of Life remains sealed until the end of the thousand years. The Book of Life IS NOT used during the judgment of mankind because it remains sealed!

The **last misunderstanding** that I want to address is that some people believe that an overcomer is a sinless person. Carefully consider two statements:

1. It is impossible for a sinner to become sinless.
2. It is impossible for a sinner to live a sinless life.

The point here is that overcoming sin is not only possible, it is necessary. However, overcoming sin to the point of sinless living remains impossible until the sealing occurs.

No one other than Jesus has lived a perfect life and no one can live a sinless life until the carnal nature is removed! This is good news. John tells us there is a sin that does not lead to death. This sin is accidental sin. (1 John 5:16,17; Romans 7:19) If we say we are without sin, the Bible says we are liars. (2 Chronicles 6:36; 1 John 1:10)

So, the promise Christ gave to the overcomers in Sardis has to be kept within the context of all His words to the seven churches. What did the church at Sardis need to overcome? They had substituted church life for spiritual life and as a result, they had become spiritually dead. Jesus insisted they wake up so that He might walk among them and make disciples of them!

Everyone who overcomes this temptation will never have his name blotted out of the Book of Life.

### **The Church At Philadelphia:**

Rev 3:7 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key [to the city] of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Rev 3:8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

Rev 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars -- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Rev 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The church at Philadelphia, like the church at Smyrna, was suffering from persecution. Some people say that Philadelphia is the only church of the seven that didn't have an internal problem. True, Jesus did not condemn the church at Philadelphia, but that church had a problem. The church at Philadelphia struggled with "the synagogue of Satan" just like the church at Smyrna. Each of the seven churches were beset with problems.

Ephesus had lost its first love.

Pergamum was beguiled with the devil's lies and gnosticism.

Thyatira was corrupted with Jezebel's teachings about sexual immorality.

Smyrna was hammered by persecution and Philadelphia was weakened by those claiming to be Jews, but the church was hanging on.

Sardis was an active church but it was spiritually dead and

Laodecia had grown lukewarm and indifferent

As Jesus tenderly looked down from Heaven upon these seven churches, there's no wonder He wasn't very happy with six of them.

The message to Philadelphia contains some wording that is often distorted by Christians needing texts to support the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture. The problem here is that the words of Jesus do not imply there will be a pre-tribulation rapture.

Because the church in Philadelphia was suffering from persecution, Jesus told them that He had set before them an open door. He had made a way for them to go through their suffering. This is the point of "What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open." By His grace and in His power, the church could go through this experience and overcome it.

Being trapped in the jaws of persecution is equivalent to being hemmed in by brick walls - there is no way out. But, Jesus is not restricted by walls. He can open a door in a solid brick wall. He makes a way possible through the impossible! Let's look closely at the words of Jesus. He told the church that He would keep them from\* the hour of trial that was going to come upon the whole world.

Rev 3:10 is often used by pre-trib rapture advocates to defend their belief that they will escape the Great Tribulation. However, when this verse is aligned with everything the Bible has to say about the end-time, this verse does not teach what it is purported to say. Consider this: Does Rev 3:10 really mean that the church at Philadelphia (whomever they may be) will be taken to Heaven before the Great Tribulation begins, but the other six churches must stay on Earth and suffer? No. Don't forget, there are a total of seven churches in Revelation. So, what happens to the other six during the Great Tribulation?

Jesus did said, "...I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." This statement is consistent with everything said in the Bible about the end-time because the judgment of the living occurs during the Great Tribulation. Because salvation comes through faith, Jesus is going to test every living person to see whether he has faith or not. The faith-full will receive the seal of God and be saved, but the faith-less will receive the mark of the beast and be destroyed.

Let's take a look at the Greek word 'ek which is translated as "from" as in "...keep you *from* the hour of trial..." One of the world's best Greek lexicons on early Christian use of the Greek language is *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (written by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich). The word in question is a Greek preposition 'ek and it is translated "from" both in the NIV and KJV. Therefore, the phrase reads, "... **I will keep you from the hour of trial** . . . " However, according to Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1952) this preposition is also translated in a variety of other ways in the NIV and KJV and it has more than a dozen different English equivalents. For example, 'ek can mean "from, out of, away from, coming out of, descending from, by, because of, beginning from, begins from, for," etc. On page 235 of this edition, the authors indicate that when the preposition is followed by a measurement of time - as in "the hour of trial," 'ek can convey the meaning "beginning from." In other words, a person is justified in reading this verse as follows: "I [Jesus] will also keep you *beginning from* the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world . . . "

When a theological point is disputed because of one word, especially a preposition, we have to take a close look. In these situations, we can and should turn to additional lexicons and other word study helps for insight. Although this effort is valuable, it is not the highest authority regarding the intended meaning of the verse. The higher and more weighty evidence must come from the Bible itself. So, here are two points for your consideration showing why Rev 3:10 should be understood as "*beginning from* the hour of trial":

a. Jesus told His disciples, ". . . **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age [world (KJV)].**" (Matt 28:20) We should take this verse at face value. Jesus plainly said He will be with His children to the very last day when He physically and gloriously appears in the clouds. This idea concurs with this reading of Rev 3:10: "I [Jesus] will also keep you *beginning from* the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world . . . "

b. Several verses in Revelation indicate that the saints will be on Earth during the Great Tribulation. The word "saints" is mentioned 12 times in Revelation (NIV) and 13 times in the KJV. Except for the 144,000 servants who are taken to Heaven at the seventh trumpet and the 24 elders who were taken to Heaven at the time of Christ's ascension, Revelation does not place the **living** saints in Heaven before the Second Coming. In fact, Revelation places the saints on Earth! Notice what happens to the saints in these verses: "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest [the remnant, (KJV)] of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus . . . He [the beast] was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation . . . If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints. . ." (Revelation 12:17; 13:7; 13:10)

I do not find support in Scripture for the idea that some saints are enjoying the bliss of Heaven while others are living through a hellish tribulation on Earth. No, the purpose of the Great Tribulation is to test those people who live on Earth and to expose who the saints really are! Revelation 14:12 also confirms the idea that the saints will suffer because they obey God. John wrote, "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who [suffer because they] obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus."

The point here is that Revelation clearly puts the saints on Earth during the Great Tribulation. Therefore, Revelation 3:10 should read, "I [Jesus] will also keep you *beginning from* the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world . . . "

The reason words about the Great Tribulation were spoken to the church in Philadelphia is two-fold: First, the saints in Philadelphia were already weakened and discouraged by persecution from the Romans and frustrated with the religious baggage of Jewish converts. This is why Jesus said, "I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars -- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."

The second reason Jesus wanted to encourage the church at Philadelphia is that He did not want them to be overcome with discouragement after they read the contents of this vision [the book of Revelation] because the book of Revelation predicts even more suffering is coming upon the saints. Because the church in Philadelphia was already hurting and weak, knowledge of the Great Tribulation could cause some to give up their faith in Christ altogether.

So, Jesus prepared them for the message in Revelation saying, "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from [failing during] the hour of trial that is going to come upon **the whole world to test** those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Bottom line: Jesus promised to sustain the church at Philadelphia with His strength and not theirs. Jesus encouraged them saying, "Hold on to what you have. . . ." These words are crucial when the fires of persecution are hot. It's human nature to give in or give up to stop the pain. So, what is the

good news for the members of Philadelphia: Those who overcome the adversary will be rewarded beyond their wildest imagination!

All overcomers will be given a special [name tag](#) when they get to Heaven. Jesus said, "I will write on him the name of my God... the name of the city of my God, and I will also write on him my new name." This name tag will permit its owner to travel anywhere in God's universe in a stretch-limo with a hundred angels attending. OK, I may be pushing the point a little bit, but you get the idea. When we receive this name tag, we will be recognized throughout God's universe as a VIP because WE were trained through suffering on Earth for the exalted role that God will give us throughout eternity and remember, the saints will reign with Jesus!

Your victory in overcoming the world makes you very special to Jesus and He wants everyone to know it, thus, a glorious name tag awaits every overcomer. Can you say, "Hallelujah! Discipleship hurts?"

**End Text:**