**The Church at Philadelphia**

**Revelation 3:7-13**

**September 14, 2024**

**Part I**

The city of Philadelphia was founded in 197-159 BC by Eumenes II, King of Pergamum or by Attalus II (159-138 BC). His surname was Philadelphus and he named the city Philadelphia, city of brotherly love, out of love for his brother. It was located on an agriculturally rich area near the Hermus River known for wine, grapes, leather, and wool products. It was on the highway that connected Laodicea and Hierapolis and that connected Asia Minor with Europe. It was 30 miles SE ofSardis and 60 miles E of Smyrna. Earthquakes frequently affected the area and there was a devastating earthquake in 17 AD that destroyed 12 cities including Philadelphia and Sardis (Thomas 271); and, to help with reconstruction, the Roman authorities waved taxes for the city for 5 years (Schreiner 184).

The city had a friendly relationship with Rome. Sacrifices were regularly offered on behalf of Augustus and many gods were worshipped and honored in the city such as Zeus (king of the gods), Apollo (son of Zeus, sun god, god of music and dance), and Hestia (virgin goddess of hearth and home). The patron god of the city was Dionysius (aka Bacchus), the god of wine and pleasure. The relationship with Rome, however, changed in 92 AD when the Roman emperor, Domitian, ordered that half of the Philadelphian vineyards be cut down and replaced with grain. This had a drastic impact on the community economically, and the inhabitants of Philadelphia became enraged.

There was a Jewish community in Philadelphia and evidence now exists for a 3rd century synagogue in the city. The conflict with the Jews suggests that the first Christians came out of the Jewish community but there is no external evidence for this (Schreiner 184).

There are 3 points of contact between the city and Jesus’ letter to the church:

1. It was a city with an “open door” through which trade, the Greek language, and Greek culture spread westward into Europe. Jesus’ word, “I have set before you an open door” (3:8), would have been clearly understood and well received by the Christians who actively spread the gospel.

2. With the earthquake devastating the city in 17 AD, out of fear, many inhabitants preferred to live outside the city in tents or huts. Thus, Jesus’ promise to the Christians that they would never have to go outside the city anymore would have been very meaningful to them (3:12).

3. After the earthquake, the city was aided financially by Tiberius. In turn, the residents wanted to honor the emperor by renaming the city *Neocaesarea* (“the city of the new Caesar”; however, the name only remained popular in the city for about 30 years; Thomas 272). Later, to honor Emperor Vespasian Flavius, the city called itself, “Flavia” and established a temple for emperor worship. Thus, Jesus’ promise to the faithful Christians that he would give them a new name (3:12) would have been very meaningful. Based on this, it is not surprising that scholars have characterized the city as:

1. A missionary outreach city

2. An anxious city whose people lived in fear of disaster (people chose to live safely outside the city in tents and huts)

3. A city which took new names from the imperial gods

Like the saints in Smyrna, the church in Philadelphia was a model of faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks no words of rebuke throughout the letter and praises them for their steadfastness and perseverance.

Incidentally, the church has remained true to Jesus through the centuries, even when Islam became the dominant religion in the area. In the 1st part of the 20th century, five Christian congregations were identified and still were prospering in Philadelphia. Of all the 7 churches of Revelation in the province of Asia, only this one in Philadelphia has spanned 20 centuries.

Finally, by way of introduction, it must be mentioned that verse 10 is the most controversial verse in Scripture concerning the second coming of Christ and the rapture of the church.

It has been interpreted by different viewpoints to support either a pre-, mid-, post-tribulation, or prewrath rapture position:

1. For example, when Jesus said that "*I will keep you from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world"*, pre-tribulation rapturists say that the hour of trial is the entire 70th week of Daniel (a 7-year period) and that the church will be protected externally by removal from earth by the rapture before the 70th week begins.

2. Mid-tribulation rapturists maintain a more mediating position and say that since the rapture is in the middle of the 70th week at the 7th trumpet, that the church is protected during the first half of the tribulation period while on earth, followed by the rapture and external protection during the last half of the tribulation.

3. Traditional post-tribulationists believe that the church is on earth during the entire 70th week and that it is sovereignly protected by the Lord throughout the entire 7-year period followed by the rapture at the very end of the 7-year period.

4. On the other hand, prewrath rapturists believe that the verse primarily does not relate to the rapture at all, but to the promised protection that God provides for faithful, spiritually alert believers during the Great Tribulation or some other time of great trial. This protection might require faithful believers to flee the persecution of the antichrist while the protection is provided entirely by the Lord.

We will examine various views of the rapture and provide supporting arguments for the different viewpoints.

**Overview:** Jesus presents himself to the church of Philadelphia as the holy and true one, with complete authority who holds the key of David. Being sovereign, he opens and creates opportunity and closes and ends opportunity. His authority is a source of great comfort not only opening the door of salvation but the door of service and evangelism. The church has loved and served the Lord faithfully and persevered through great trial and Jesus states no rebuke or reproof against them. The Jews in Philadelphia think they represent the true family of God, his synagogue, but they will be surprised to find out that God loves the Philadelphian Christians and that Christians are the true people of God. Because the church was severely tested at a previously unknown time and successfully persevered and defended the gospel and person of Christ, Jesus promises to keep them from a future, yet even worse time of testing, that will come upon the whole world. Jesus tells them that he is coming back and encourages them to be faithful and not slide back and lose their crown. If they conquer in their testing, they’ll receive a permanent spot in God’s temple. God’s name will be written upon them along with the name of the new Jerusalem, indicating they belong to the Lord. All the churches need to hear this and persevere just as the church of Philadelphia remained faithful (Schreiner 185).  **3:7-8: *And* *to the angel in the church at 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: 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.***

1. The “*ang*e*l*” is best understood to be the pastor of the church

2. “*he who is holy, he who is true”,*

A. This self-description of Jesus is from chapter 1. It refers to him as holy and true. Scripture teaches that because God is holy, he expects his people to imitate him and be holy (Lev 11:45; 18:30; 19:2; 20:7; I Pet 1:15-16; Matt 5:48).

B. God is “the Holy One” (Is 40:25; Hab 3:3), but here Jesus is called holy and true. *Hagios* (Gk), holy, emphasizes Jesus being set apart and belonging to God (Thomas 273).

C. “True” means that which is genuine and is the opposite of false. Jesus’ word and promises are true and reliable; he never breaks his word but fulfills all that he says and promises along with its implications. Christ is truth, itself. When we are confronted by Christ, we are confronted “by no shadowy outline of the truth, but with the truth, itself” (Thomas 273)

3. Those who called themselves “Jews, and are not”, were false (see v. 9) and stand in contrast to Jesus, whose word is entirely trustworthy.

4. “*he who has the key of David, he who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”*

A*. “He who has the key of David”,* refers to the Messianic lineage of Jesus, Is 22:20-22: *“I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder; when he opens no once will shut, and what he shuts no one will open.”* These words were given to Eliakim son of Hilkiah. He served King Hezekiah as a faithful steward and had authority over the royal treasury. He serves as an illustration of Jesus the Messiah [see Is 9:6]) who controls entrance to David’s “house”, which ultimately represents the Messianic kingdom (Thomas 275),

B. The “key of David” does not refer to the “keys of death and Hades” (1:18); it refers to his sovereignty (Is 22:22). He is the absolute ruler in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). What he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open. His word is final.

C. The opening and shutting of doors must be interpreted in the context of the Jews in Philadelphia (v.9). The Jews appeared to oppose the admission of Gentiles into God’s kingdom, but Jesus “opened the door” to them and warmly welcomed them into the church and provided the opportunity for the Philadelphians to reach them. Jesus alone has the power to admit into or exclude from his kingdom (Thomas 275). Ironically, the Jews are the ones who presently are shut out of God’s kingdom (by refusing their Messiah) even though they think they are the chosen people of God (they are in for a big surprise).

5. “*I know your works*“; Jesus was thoroughly acquainted with the works of the Philadelphians and did not need to list them. He had no rebuke or reproof against them. Their works probably relate to defending the gospel, Christ’s divine nature, and evangelism.

6. “*See, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it*;

A. This clause goes with the preceding statement of how Jesus knows (*oida*, Gk) their works.

B. It refers to what the church was doing

a. They appear to have been actively preaching and teaching the gospel

b. They were opening the door of the kingdom of God and eternal life to all who would enter.

C. The “o*pen door*” refers to the door opened by the Lord

a. Traffic is not going through the door into the world, but rather it is coming through the door from the world into the kingdom of God

b. The Lord is sovereign and opens the door to make the work of evangelism possible and effective (I Cor 3:6). E.g., Paul and Barnabas reported to the church in Antioch how God “had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). God opens the door that no one can shut, so that the people may enter into his presence and eternal life.

D. Wherever he opens doors for his workers, he blesses their work of presenting the gospel (I Cor 16:9; II Cor 2:12; Col 4:3). There, the work of missions and evangelism flourishes when converts come to faith in Christ.

E. In spite of fierce opposition by the Jews in the synagogue of Satan (v.9), the little group (i.e., a small number of people; Thomas 279) of faithful believers in Philadelphia were assured of a blessing because Jesus had opened the door to Gentile and Jewish converts for them.

F. In summary, God is sovereign in salvation; for he either opens or shuts the doors of service (Is 45:1; I Cor 16:9; II Cor 2:12; Col 4:3). And the door that God opens is a stimulus to Christians to be actively engaged in the work of evangelism and missions.

7. “*for you have a little strength”;* refers to the small number of saints in the church at Philadelphia, who were all faithful. In the eyes of local Jews, the small group of Christians was insignificant and not regarded as important. However, they were important to the Lord. Earlier in his earthly ministry, the Lord encouraged his disciples with the words, “*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom,* Lu 12:32”. Remember, the Lord started small with 12 apostles.

8*.* KEY: *“have kept my word, and have not denied my name”;* these two commendations served to encourage the heart of this small group of believers.

A. They had kept the word of Jesus, and they had not denied his name. *“have kept my word”,* and *“have not denied my name*” are two aorist, past tense Greek verbs that point to a specific, historical situation that required their perseverance to get through (Thomas 279). Apparently, the Jews tried to force the Christians to reject Christ’s teaching and to deny him.

B. The “word” of Jesus refers to the gospel and the “name” of Jesus refers to the revelation of himself, i.e., all that he is, his nature, deity, sovereignty, authority, love, compassion, and care.

C. Keeping his word (the true gospel) means guarding it from being subverted, altered, keeping it from being changed. Keeping it true.

D. Not *denying* his name means remaining *faithful* to him, always aligning with him, standing with him, revealing who he is in his deity and fullness to everyone.

E. These two commendations clearly indicate that the faithful saints in Philadelphia had endured strong opposition from Jews and Gentiles at some unknown time in the past.

1. Their adversaries (“the synagogue of Satan”) opposed the gospel message and the person and deity of Jesus Christ

2. Yet they remained true to their Lord and received the greatest blessing possible: the praise and approval of the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., “well done thy good and faithful servant”).

**3:9 “*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***

1. “*Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie”; “Indeed*” = “look” (imperatival force) = “behold”; and, it occurs twice for emphasis. This verse is nearly identical to 2:9 in the letter to the church at Smyrna. Note that the break in the middle of the verse causes the 2nd part to strengthen the 1st. This is a form of Hebrew syntax for emphasis.

A. Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Pergamos are the only churches of the seven that make specific reference to Jewish opposition, their synagogue, and their master, Satan. Smyrna and Philadelphia, though, are the only churches that receive praise without reproof.

B. Jewish Christians lived under tremendous persecution.

1. They were no longer tolerated in synagogues after the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

2. Rabbinic leaders met in 90 A.D. in the city of Jamnia (modern Yavne) to determine the canon of Jewish Scriptures and to formulate the so-called *Eighteen Benedictions* (aka *Amidah*, or *Tefilat HaAmidah*, or *Shemoneh Esreh* [meaning eighteen]). Today this is the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy (*Amidah*, Wikipedia).

3. Benediction number 12 (originally the 19th) was composed in response to the Essenes and Messianic Christians. It says: *For apostates (Jewish Christians) let there be no hope, and the kingdom of insolence may thou uproot speedily in our days and let Christians* (gentile) *and the heretics (Jewish Christians) perish in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of life and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art thou O Lord, who humblest the insolent.*

4. After the completion of the *Eighteen Benedictions,* Jews denounced both Jewish and Gentile Christians during the worship services in local synagogues.

5. The 12th benediction was used as a “litmus test” by the Rabbis. A Messianic Jew could attend the synagogue faithfully, recite the first 18 benedictions but could notinvoke a curse on his fellow followers of Yeshua, the Messiah. This way, when a Jew would not recite the 12th benediction he was suspected of heresy and faced excommunication.

2. “*Synagogue of Satan*”; Jesus called the Jewish assembly “the synagogue of Satan”.

A. This is the *divine* perspective and response against the Jews who prided themselves on being God’s chosen people. However, they became instruments of Satan, who as their ruler used them to undermine and if it were possible, to destroy the church.

B. By rejecting Jesus and his followers, they indirectly acknowledged Satan as their lord. Jesus called them liars because they no longer could claim to be God’s people (cf. John 8:42-45).

3. *“Indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet and to know that I have loved you”;* this is a difficult verse to understand.

A. In the O.T., Israel, as God’s chosen nation was given the promise of restoration after the return from the exile and ultimately, in the Millennial Kingdom. God said, *“Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed”* (Isaiah 49:23; see also 60:14).It is best to understand this to represent the ultimate eschatologic salvation of Israel (see B2 below)

B. However, some say that since Israel committed the “fatal” sin of rejecting their Messiah, God transferred all his “kingdom” promises to Israel to the church, who now becomes the “true Israel” of God (Ro 2:28-29). This, they say, leaves no future for Israel with God and, thus, supposedly, we see in Rev 3:9, the fulfillment of that judgment against Israel, who will come at the end of the age and bow before the Gentiles acknowledging that they are the beloved, blessed children of God (Replacement or Covenant Theology; Amillennialism).

1. This view has to be rejected. To say that the Jews of Philadelphia will come and worship before the Philadelphian Christians is simply a metaphorical expression that involves no more than the acknowledgment that the church is the object of Christ’s love and that with his coming (v.11), their faith in him will be vindicated, and that the Jews, who had persecuted them, were wrong and will repent and accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah.

2. There is no suggestion here that the future eschatologic salvation of the nation of Israel (Zech 13:7-9; Rom 11:11-32) is jeopardized by the action of these Jews or any others (e.g., at the crucifixion). This actually refers to the ultimate eschatologic salvation of the Jews (Rom 11:26) who bow to the church here because Christ is the head of the church and the Jews are really bowing to the Lord.

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**Revelation 3:7-13**

**October 19, 2024**

**Part II**

**Overview:** Jesus presents himself to the church of Philadelphia as the holy and true one, with complete authority who holds the key of David. Being sovereign, he opens and creates opportunity and closes and ends opportunity. His authority is a source of great comfort not only opening the door of salvation but the door of service and evangelism. The church has loved and served the Lord faithfully and persevered through great trial and Jesus states no rebuke or reproof against them. The synagogue Jews in Philadelphia think they represent the true family of God, his synagogue, but they will be surprised to find out that God loves the Philadelphian Christians and that Christians are the true people of God. Because the church was severely tested at a previously unknown time and successfully persevered and defended the gospel and person of Christ, Jesus promises to keep them from a future, yet even worse time of testing, that will come upon the whole world. Jesus tells them that he is coming back and encourages them to be faithful and not slide back and lose their crown. If they conquer in their testing, they’ll receive a permanent spot in God’s temple. God’s name will be written upon them along with the name of the new Jerusalem, indicating they belong to the Lord. All the churches need to hear this and persevere just as the church of Philadelphia remained faithful (Schreiner 185).

**3:10: “*Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth”***

What does this verse mean? Let’s break it down. It is very controversial!

**1. *“Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you***

***”;***this verse connects with verse 8 and gives further explanation as to what Jesus meant when he said you “*have kept my word and have not denied my name”* (3:8)*.*

A. What does this say? Literally, “because you kept (*tereo*, Gk; aorist, past tense) the word of my perseverance (*hupomone*, Gk), I also will keep you(*tereo*, Gk; future tense)”.

B. *Tereo* (Gk) is used 11 times in Revelation (1:3; 2:26; 3:3; 3:8, 10 (2x’s); 12:17; 14:12; 16:15; 22:7; 22:9). In all these verses, it carries the basic idea “to keep” or to “hold fast”. It can mean guard, keep (watch over), keep (not lose), keep (protect, preserve), fulfill, observe, and obey (Bauer, A&G, 814)

1. It is used twice in verse 10 and probably carries two different meanings: “*Because you have kept my command to persevere”;* kept *=* observed, obeyed; “*I also shall keep you from the hour”;* keep =preserve, protect

2. The logical connection here is that in the past, because the Philadelphian church obeyed his command to persevere in some very difficult unknown situation (v. 8), “and did not deny my name”, Christ will, in return, preserve or protect them from some future trouble or tribulation.

3. The future keeping (protection) by Christ is **directly** dependent upon the church’s prior keeping of (obedience to) his command and remaining faithful to him. It is a trade; i.e., the church is promised future protection because they obeyed his command (“word”) to persevere in the past (Latin: *quid pro quo*, “this for that”).

C. *“Persevere”* is *hupomone* (Gk).

1. It is used 7 times in the book of Revelation (1:9; 2:2; 2:3; 2:19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12); the word basically means to “remain under” something or remain in a difficult situation; hence, perseverance, steadfastness, fortitude, or endurance in the midst of trials (Bauer, A&G 846). In Revelation, it carries the meaning of perseverance and endurance in difficult trials, all the way from unspecified tribulation (2:2,19) to potentially, the persecution of the antichrist in the Great Tribulation (13:10; 14:12).

2. It is significant that after the use of *hupomone* in 3:10, the next 2 instances of its use occur in contexts that clearly indicate the perseverance of the saints in the Great Tribulation (13:10; 14:12).

3. In fact, the description of the saints’ perseverance in 14:12 is remarkably similar to that in 3:10.

a. In 14:12, in the midst of persecution by the antichrist, the Lord says that the saints’ perseverance (*hupomone,* Gk) was demonstrated by keeping (*tereo*, Gk) the commandments of God. I.e., “*Here, is the perseverance of the saints; who keep (tereo,* Gk*) the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ”.*

b.In 3:10, he says, “*Because you have kept my command to persevere* (in great trial)*, I also will keep you from the hour which shall come upon the whole world”.*

c. In both instances, the saints keep (*tereo*, Gk) the Lord’s word or command to persevere in the face of great trials.

d. This suggests that the situations could be related. I.e., the trial in 3:10 is an illustration or a near/far prophecy of the trial of the Great Tribulation described in 14:12 and 13:10. In other words,

could 13:10 and 14:12 be the future fulfillment of 3:10?

**2. *“from the hour of temptation which shall come upon the whole world”***

A. *“the hour of temptation”*;the word “hour”, *hora* (Gk), is used 10 times in the book of Revelation (3:3, 10; 9:15; 11:13; 14:7, 15; 17:12; 18:10, 17, 19).

B. It usually does not refer to a literal hour but to an extended period of testing and tribulation. Except in 9:15 and 11:13, it does not refer to a literal hour

C. This “hour of temptation” because of its universality (“upon the whole world”), is often understood to refer to the final judgment of the Great Tribulation or judgments that lead up to it (Schreiner 192). It is referred to in Dan 12:1; Matt 24:9-27; Mark 13:9-23; Luke 21:5- 36; and II Thes 2:3-12.

1. It is the last 3 ½ years of Daniel’s 70th week (Dan 9:27); it is the rule of antichrist described in Rev 12:7-17; 13:1-18; 14:9- 13.

2. “*temptation”* is *peirasmos* (Gk) and has a 2-fold meaning:

a. temptation, enticement to sin, Matt 6:13; Lu 4:1-2; I Tim 6:9

b. testing or trial, I Co 10:13; Jam 1:2, 12 (Bauer, A&G, 640)

3. When the source of *peirasmos* (Gk) is satanic, it always is a temptation to sin and can be directed against the saved or the lost.

4. When the source is God, it is always a test or trial for the believer to prove his genuineness or faithfulness. Satan, however, can turn this into a temptation to sin (Matt 4:1).

5. **KEY:** During the Great Tribulation, the source of temptation is Satan along with his assistants, the antichrist, and the false prophet. The temptation is directed against unbelievers to continue in sin and unbelief; and, against believerswho are persecuted and tempted to turn away from God and to worship Satan (Rev 12:7-13:18; **6:9-11**).

6. This is accomplished 4 ways:

a. deception (Matt 24:5, 11, 23-26; II Thes 2:3-4, 9-12; Rev 13:11-14)

b. persecution (Matt 24:9, 15-22; II Thes 1:4-8; Rev 12:7- 17; 13:5-10; Matt 10:16-23; Luke 17:20-18:8).

c. worshipping the image(s) of antichrist (Rev 13:11-15; 9:20; Is 2:17-21)

d. receiving the mark of the beast (Rev 13:16-17).

7. This temptation by Satan against professing believers is very successful. There is widespread apostasy of professing believers who fall away from Christ, II Thes 2:3-4; Matt 24:9-12; 10:21; Luke 18:1-8

D. Another Viewpoint: The “hour of temptation” is the entire 7-year period of the 70th week of Daniel. It is said (incorrectly?) to be the same as the so-called “Tribulation Period” and to be synonymous with God’s wrath. This view maintains that all of the events of the 70th week (7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls) constitute the wrath of God. This is an inference from Scripture without exegetical evidence to demonstrate it. Those who support this view say that the source of the “Tribulation” is God. There are many dangers and problems associated with this view.

1. Nowhere in Scripture are the first 5 seals of Revelation (commonly understood to be in the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel) referred to as manifestations of God’s Day of the Lord wrath (Rev 6:1-11). In fact, the 5th seal is specifically said **not** to come from God but from “*those who dwell on the earth*”. Here, the souls of believing martyrs, killed for their faithfulness to the Lord, ask God, “*How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth*?” (6:10). Obviously, the Lord is not responsible for the death of these martyrs. God’s wrath begins later after the opening of the 6th seal (Rev 6:12-17).

2. God’s wrath is specifically mentioned to begin in Scripture after the 6th seal is broken and the great cosmic disturbances are displayed as the sign of the end of the age and the commencement of God’s wrath, 6:12-17 (cf. Matt 24:29). This sign is the singular event that Christ foretold his disciples would announce his coming back to earth and the beginning of the Day of the Lord (Matt 24:3, 29; Joel 2:28-31; Acts 2:17- 21). After the 6th seal is broken we are told that “the wrath of the Lamb” is about to commence (Rev 6:15-17), then a “great multitude which no one could count” is taken up to heaven (7:9-14), the 7th seal is opened, and the wrath of God begins consisting of the trumpet and bowl judgments (8:1-9:21; 16:1- 21). This is deep into the 2nd half of the 70th week of Daniel.

3. KEY: If the entire 70th week is God’s wrath, the 1st seal which represents false christs (Matt 24:5; Rev 6:1-2), would teach that God is the one who sends false christs to deceive unbelievers and his own elect believers (Matt 24:23-24).

a. If the 4 horsemen are instruments of God’s wrath (Rev 6:1-8), then God would be in the unthinkable position of sending false christs as his own agents to deceive his own elect!

b. Such a logical contradiction is excluded not only by common sense, but explicitly by Christ himself. When accused by the pharisees of casting out demons by the power of Satan, the Lord said, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand (Matt 12:25-26)?”

4. If the entire 70th week is God’s wrath then he will be responsible for the death of believers during the 5th seal. This is recorded in Rev 6:9 where we see the “souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained”.

a. Such a position contradicts the divine assurance that all who believe in Christ (not just the believers who live before the 70th week) will have the unconditional promise of “being saved from wrath through him (Rom 5:9)”.

b. Paul made the same promise to the Thessalonians that “God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation (deliverance) through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thes 5:9)”.

c. It also explains why the martyrs associated with the 5th seal ask the Lord, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth (Rev 6:10)?” The martyrs do *not* hold God accountable for their deaths but “those who dwell on the earth”, i.e., unbelievers.

d. KEY; this would be a meaningless question if God’s Day of the Lord wrath had already begun!

e. Finally, those who hold this view must answer this question: Why would God turn his wrath on his own elect nation or people? The persecution associated with the Great Tribulation will be the worst “since the beginning of the world” (Matt 24:21). God will permit the wrath of Satan (Rev 12:12) to test his people, to separate the real from the false, the wheat from the tares (Matt 13:24-30; 36-43). But, to say that God is intentionally responsible for the slaughter of those who refuse to bow down to antichrist, who by definition are the ***real*** overcomers (i.e., during the 5th seal), it would be like shooting your own child for being obedient. It makes absolutely no sense!

5. The Great Tribulation (Matt 24:21) is best identified as the wrath of Satan. In Daniel 9:7, the antichrist breaks his covenant with the nation of Israel after 3½ years. Simultaneously, we’re told in Rev 12:12 that Satan is cast “down to earth having *great wrath* because he knows that he has a short time”. He first goes after “the women”, faithful Israel (144,000 Jews, Rev 7:1-8) but she escapes from him into the wilderness (12:14-16). He then becomes “enraged and went off to make war with the rest of of her (the woman’s) children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus Christ” (12:17; 13:7). This begins at the midpoint of the 70th week (Daniel 9:27).

6. KEY: If the entire 70th week is the Day of the Lord, then antichrist will prevail on earth over the Lord during the time when Isaiah says, “the Lord alone shall be exalted…” (Isaiah 2:11-12, 17; cf. II Thes 2:4).

a. In other words, if the Day of the Lord were to begin at the beginning of the 70th week at the same time that antichrist supposedly is expanding his kingdom, antichrist would prevail over the Lord the majority of those 7 years!

b. While God was supposedly venting his great Day of the Lord wrath on the earth, antichrist would be expanding his satanic kingdom, even to the point of setting up his throne in God’s temple (II Thes 2:4), demanding worship from the world, and killing all those who refuse to comply (Rev 13:3-7,11-15). This is impossible!

c. Taking this viewpoint contradicts Scripture: “*The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the Day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low … and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day”* (Is 2:11-12, 17; 13:6- 13; II Pet 3:4, 10-13; Rev 8:1-9:21; 15:1-16:17).

d. In other words, if the “*Lord alone shall be exalted*” in the Day of the Lord, as Isaiah explicitly says, then it is a *contradiction* to believe that during the Day of the Lord an unhindered antichrist will ascend in power to rule the world, declare himself to be God, demand and receive the world’s worship (II Thes 2:3-4; Rev 13:3-8), and kill those who refuse to comply.

7. Christ affirms that after the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:9-25) and after the cosmic disturbances (Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12-17), the Day of the Lord will come (Matt 24:30-31). The Day of the Lord (rapture and wrath of God commencing on the same day) cannot occur during the entire 70th week of Daniel. It begins immediately after the wrath of Satan (Great Tribulation) is “*cut short”* (Matt 24:22; “*cut short”* = *kolobao*; Gk = “amputated”, “shortened”) by the cosmic disturbances of Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12-17; Luke 21:25-28; Joel 2:30-31.

**3.** **“*from the hour of trial*”;** What does it mean for thechurch to bekept **“**from the hour of trial?” Some argue that the phrase teaches that the church is removed externally from the hour of trial by the rapture and is entirely spared from judgment (Walvoord 1966, 86-88; Thomas 1992, 283-290; Patterson 2012 130-133; Guzik 73; Fanning 177; MacArthur 124). Others, however, argue that the rapture is nowhere to be found here (its foreign to the context of the 7 churches). I.e., John is giving no indication that the church will be raptured from the earth before the hour of trial (Schreiner 193). Instead, Jesus promised that the church will escape the time of testing while living through it on the earth (Apringus in Weinrich 2011: 37; Mounce 119; Aune 239-40; Sweet 104; Osborne 192-194; Smalley 92; Beale 290-92; Koester 325-6; Weima 209; Easley 58; Blount 77; Hamilton 116; Kistemaker 162; Kelly 75; Charles (Vol 1) 90). This means that the church would be tested but not be entirely overcome by its adversaries (Bede in Weinrich 122). In a related situation, Jesus told the church at Smyrna that he would leave them on earth while being tested “for 10 days.” He says, “I know your tribulation and your poverty … Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested and have tribulation for ten days” (2:9-10). This view is consistent, as well, with the plagues of the Exodus, where the plagues affected the people of Egypt, but had no effect on Israel. They escaped them (Ex 8:22-23; 9:4-7, 26; 10:23; 11:5-7; 12:11-13, 23) even while living in the same land.

A nearly identical situation as in Rev 3:10 (i.e., “kept from the hour of trial”) is described in John’s Gospel concerning Jesus’ disciples (17:15). Here, Jesus prays for his disciples asking that they be protected from the evil one, even though they will continue to be on the earth. He prayed, “I am not praying that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them (*tereo ek*, Gk) from the evil one.” The exact same Greek phrase *tereo ek* that we find in Rev 3:10 is in John 17:15, and “it is clear in the fourth gospel that Jesus keeps his disciples from the evil one not by removing them from the world but by sustaining them while they are in the world” (Schreiner 194). The same type of preservation from judgment is put forth in Rev 3:10. This also is like II Pet 2:9 where we’re told that “the Lord knows how to keep the godly from temptation” (Schreiner 194), which describes the judgment of the wicked and the protection of Noah and Lot. Both Noah and Lot were not removed from the world but were kept from judgment while living in the world.

The word *from* in the phrase “kept *from* the hour of trial” is the Greek preposition *ek,* and its different interpretations contribute to various views of the rapture of the church. Townsend wrote (*Bib Sac* July-Sept, 1980 p.253), “The preposition *ek* is the focal point of the debate over whether Revelation 3:10 promises internal or external preservation from the hour of testing. The standard Greek lexicons and grammars are in general agreement on the basic meaning of the preposition. According to A.T. Robertson, ‘The word means out of or out from within’” (Robertson 596).

What can we say about the meaning of *ek* and how does it impact the rapture of the church?

A. The basic meaning of *ek* always refers to something that comes “out from within”, e.g., taking a fish from (out of) water. This implies that the church after being protected on earth during the hour of trial (i.e., the Great Tribulation) ultimately is taken out of it to Heaven (see Rev 7:14 where *ek* is used). It is taken “out from within” the Great Tribulation. This would be the normal understanding of the word.

B. It is combined with the Greek word *tereo (*protect, preserve) and the combination carries the basic idea of “protection from” (protection within the Great Tribulation) rather than the idea of “keeping from” (removal prior to the Great Tribulation).

C. This is controversial: Many scholars understand *tereo ek* to mean keep or protect within a sphere of danger. In other words, as argued above, they understand the church to be protected from the antichrist while they are on earth inside the period of the Great Tribulation. In fact, the rapture might not even be alluded to in this verse. These scholars argue that the rapture is not required by *tereo ek* in this verse.

D. Pre-tribulational scholars disagree and believe the meaning of *ek* is “separation from” and understand that the verse teaches that the church is physically removed from the earth prior to the start of the Great Tribulation. However, this is not the normal usage of the word (i.e., “out from within”); it requires the word to mean a spatial or physical separation without having been part of the sphere from which separation occurs. This is controversial and difficult to prove from the Septuagint or the N.T. (See *Three Views of the Rapture*, Feinberg, Archer, and Moo).

E. There is no conclusive answer from the Greek language; scholars disagree. However, the usual definition of *ek* does not require a pre-tribulational rapture in this verse.

**4. “*which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth”.***

A. The recipients of the temptations of Satan in the Great Tribulation are the inhabitants of *“the whole world”.*

B. In other places in Revelation where the latter phrase occurs (“*those who dwell on the earth”),* it might refer only to the lost (Rev 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x’s] 13:8, 14; 17:8)

C. However, this is controversial and depends on the context. E.g., if this promise actually occurred to the 1st century Philadelphian church (e.g., as part of a near-far prophecy) and it is protected within that “hour of trial” (as it would have to be), then “*those who dwell on the earth”* includes the saved and the lost, who are tempted by Satan to turn away from God and worship him. We see this also in 13:8-10 and 13:14-15. Both 13:8-10 and 14-15 includes a qualification to exclude believers from the lost. So, the phrase “those who dwell on the earth” doesn’t automatically exclude the saved on the earth.

D. *“to test”* is *peirazo* (Gk)*,* the verb form of *peirasmos;* if Satan is the tempter, it means to be tempted with evil; i.e., to turn away from God and to worship Satan and includes the lost and saved. When the source is God, it is always a test or trial for the believer to prove his genuineness or faithfulness. Satan, can turn this into a temptation to sin (Matt 4:1).

**3:11** **“*Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown”***

1. “*Behold, I am coming quickly!* This should be understood as the

eschatologic 2nd coming (*parousia,* Gk) of Christ, which includes the rapture of the church and the initiation of the Day of the Lord beginning on the same day.

2. The “coming” of Christ to the churches of Ephesus (2:5), Pergamum (2:16), and Sardis (3:3) is because of unrepented sin in the church; and posed a threat to each church. It was a reference to Christ’s coming in judgment against each church if they did not repent of their specific sins. However, here, Christ is not coming in judgment against the church at Philadelphia but to receive and reward this faithful church at the end of the age.

3. “*I am coming quickly” (erchomai taxu,* Gk*)* should be understood similarly to our understanding of the phrase “*Things which must shortly take place* (*a dei genesthai ev taxei,* Gk; or, *events which must quickly come to pass)* in Revelation 1:1 (see also 2:16; 22:6, 7, 12, 20). There are several possibilities;

A*. taxei* and related words areused 39 times in Scripture and translated as *quickly* (16x), *swift* (2x), *hastily* (1x), *shortly* (11x), *soon* (3x), *suddenly* (1x), *outrun* (1x), *with all speed* (1x), *speedily* (1x), *lightly* (1x), *the sooner* (1x).

B. Suggestions for the meaning of this phrase are:

1. Fulfillment of the events are expected in the very near future, i.e., shortly or soon.

2. Certainty of the events in question; refers to the Lord speedily bringing them to pass when the time comes.

3. Suddenly, without delay when the time comes. Includes the idea of swiftly, once they begin, they come quickly

4. Blending of near/far prophecy into one event; the distant future is seen in terms of the immediate future.

5. Imminent, events of chapters 1 to 3 could occur at any moment. However, this is very doubtful. This changes the definition of the word. Imminent is not part of the definition of the word.

4. *“Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown”.*

A. The crown is a *stephanos*, Gk; the word is used many times in Scripture (I Cor 9:25; II Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; I Pet 5:4) and its root definition refers to the wreath awarded to the winner of an athletic contest. Here it refers to the spiritual crown awarded to faithful believers. The metaphor would have been appropriate to the city of Philadelphia since it was known for its athletic contests.

B. In the context, “*holding fast what you have*” refers to the crown they have earned through previous faithfulness. They “*kept*” Jesus’ “*word*”, did not “*deny*” his “*name*”, 3:8; and, “kept” his “*command to persevere*”, 3:10. If they are to hold fast to what they have already earned (i.e. their crown), so that no one takes it away, they must continue to do what they have been doing. In other words, continued faithfulness, obedience, and perseverance (i.e., not denying his name) is required until the Lord’s return. This will be especially appropriate to the generation of believers alive at the return of Christ in the last days.

C. Thus, in the context, it makes sense to understand that Jesus is referring to the requirement for future faithfulness, obedience, and perseverance on the part of the Philadelphia church while waiting for the Lord’s return, up to and including the “*hour of trial”,* when the last generation of believers (before the Lord’s return) will face the greatest threat to their crown and reward. This seems to be the case when Jesus uses the term “*overcomer*” (3:12) synonymously with those who are waiting for the Lord’s return and holding fast to what they have.

D. However, a pre-tribulational rapture would remove believers before the “*hour of trial”*

E. The content of the crown for the overcomer is 4-fold and is explained in 3:12: “*He who overcomes* (holds fast to what he has)(1) *I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more;* (2) *I will write on him the name of my God and;* (3) *the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God. And* (4) *I will write on him my new name.*” See explanation below.

**3:12: “*He who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more. 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.*”**

1. “*He who overcomes”* refers to genuine believers throughout the church age.

2. “*I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more”.* Several explanations exist for the word “pillar”; keep in mind the symbolical significance Jesus is alluding to. He is referring to the honor that will be given to overcomers.

A. Jesus may be alluding to ancient temples that had a number of pillars carved in the form of human beings that surrounded them. He is thus alluding to the honor that awaits faithful believers.

B. Similarly, he may be alluding to how a pillar in a temple served to honor a distinguished person in much the same way plaques are attached to pillars in European cathedrals.

C. He is alluding to a pillar in the sense of James, Peter, and John, who were regarded as pillars in the church, Gal 2:9; also I Tim 3:15. This would refer to a leader or person characterized by truth; someone “strong” in the word and faith. It refers to their permanence, stability, and immovability.

D. He is referring to eternal life and the eternal place of honor overcomers will have in the temple of God

E. “Temple” might refer generically to God’s temple vs. the pagan temples in the city.

F. It might also refer to the temple rebuilt in Jerusalem for the worship of God during in the Millennial Kingdom, Ezek 40-48

G. It might also refer to Heaven, itself (21:1). In this case, Jesus is making the marvelous promise to believers that they will have an eternal place of honor in the temple of God, or Heaven. To people used to fleeing their city because of earthquakes or to escape their enemies, the promise that they will not go out from heaven would be greatly encouraging (best).

2. “*I will write on him the name of my God”;*

A.This depicts ownership, signifying that all believers, i.e., all overcomers, belong to God.

B. It also speaks of the intimate personal relationship we will have with him for forever.

C. There could be a contrast intended between the saved and the lost. Believers receive the names of God and the Lamb, whereas unbelievers bear the name and the number of the beast, Rev 13:17- 18.

3. (*I will write on him) “the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God”*

A. This signifies citizenship in the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven to earth, Rev 21:9-27.

B. Since they were used to new names for their city, this promise would have been very meaningful to the believers. In A.D. 17 after an earthquake, Emperor Tiberius exempted them from paying taxes and donated money for rebuilding the city. In thankfulness, they renamed the city “Neocaesarea”. Several decades later when they wished to honor Emperor Vespasian, they renamed the city “Flavia”. Now the saints in Philadelphia are told that on them will be written the name of God, the name of the new Jerusalem, and as we will see below, the name of Jesus. These names will serve as a passport for entrance into God’s presence and as a sign of citizenship in the new Jerusalem.

4. “*And I will write on him my new name.*” Finally, Christ promises believers his new name.

A. Believers in the city of Antioch were the first to receive the name, Christian, i.e., follower of Christ (Acts 11:26). To the world this was a term of derision (“little Christ”, Acts 26:28; I Pet 4:16). But when he enters the new Jerusalem, the Christian receives Christ’s new name.

B. Christ’s new name represents the fullness of his person. In Heaven, believers “will see him as he is” (I John 3:2) and whatever we know of him now, will pale in comparison to what we will see in him then. The new name by which we will be privileged to call him will reflect the glorious revelation of his fullness. We do not know what this new name is.

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

1. These words are the same in all the 7 letters to the churches in the province of Asia.

2. And once again, they stress the fact that the message of this and every letter is meant for all the churches in every age and place.

3. Believers must obey the truths found in each letter, since the 7 churches represent the types of churches that have existed throughout history.

4. The letter to the faithful Philadelphia church reveals that the holy, true, sovereign, and omnipotent God pours out his blessings on churches and believers who remain loyal to him.

A. He will bless them with open doors for evangelism, eternal salvation, and kingdom blessings.

B. To the churches that are faithful, obedient, persevere, and who do not deny his name, he will deliver them from the hour of trial, the Great Tribulation that will come upon the whole earth.

C. He ultimately will bring all those who persevere in their faith into the eternal bliss of heaven, where he will fully reveal himself to them.

5. The promises of these rich blessings should motivate every Christian and every church to follow the Philadelphia church’s example of steadfast faithfulness in every situation of life.